

HEREAFTER

AND JUDGMENT

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HEREAFTER AND JUDGMENT.

The Satan of the Old Testament.
The Satan of the New Testament.

BY THE
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*ἔρηνῶτε τὰς γραφὰς, ὅτι ὑμεῖς δοκεῖτε ἐν αὐταῖς ζωὴν
αἰώνιον ἔχειν.*

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CHAPTER I.

THE SATAN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

LIFE, in Christian belief, is eternal; and so life and eternity, the present and the future, are strictly blended into one. The living principle in Man may be called the soul, or other name which expresses the same idea; but, however named, once vivified, it is eternal. Nothing, as taught in Christianity, can destroy, nothing lessen it. It is God's gift to the human race, independent of faith and goodness on the one hand, and the most execrable crimes on the other. The child of an hour has inherited it equally with the man who is in his final stage of eighty or a hundred years. In its eternity it is God's most precious gift, surpassing all others, for without it all others would be the festivity or happiness of a day, with an evening to overshadow, and a night to close. A dreary

thought ! Life would be bound and tied down to human applause, which at its best falls in the end into inscriptions, statues, laudatory memoirs, and a part in the chequered history of nations and peoples. All, too, of limited survival, and in no regard of true permanence. An unsatisfying Life, as some of the wisest and best have found in their last hours, with life behind, and eternity in view.

Taken in another and more direct way. It brings the soul into the immediate presence of God, by prayer in life, with the hope of Heaven to succeed ; by confidence in life, from the protecting hand above. The Christian, uniting his life with eternity, has one distinct issue before him : eternity of happiness, or eternity of suffering. He is received into the presence of God for ever, or he is wholly cast forth from that presence. It is joy unsurpassable, or hopeless sorrow. With God, or away from God. With all the happiness which, however faintly, we can bring ourselves to conceive of such a state, or the anguish of eternal remorse. All that we know of those two states we know from God Himself through the inspiration of His servants ; we have no other source ; and in the whole course of that Inspiration not a thought, or the vestige of a thought, of any

neutral or intermediate state has been intimated or revealed.

All this opens a wide field for belief, unbelief, and controversy, which from the first ages has torn, and will still tear the Christian world for many ages to come. As is the case in all great questions, there is so much diversified argument at hand that decision on argument is next to impossible. It is infinite. Like the Sibyl's branch, 'Primo avolso, non deficit alter.' There is also another obstacle. If life and eternity are the gifts of God they are also the secret of God. The researches of generation after generation only show that, though partially solved by faith, it is still a mystery, closed to reason; and reason, unhappily, is the modern chosen solvent in many of our foremost men. Hence a struggle. Much has been revealed to us, but not a ten thousandth part of what remains untold. And the revelation itself has been mostly enshrined in allegory and mystic signs, leaving a wide field open to interpretation, but one so engrossing to reflective minds, that it may justly be said to comprise in the word 'Hereafter' the most solemn of all interests, thoughts, and hopes on earth to a Christian man.

It is paramount. It should colour his

thoughts and influence his actions. Not openly, as in Pharisaic sense, but as a secret spring known only to himself ; seen only in its results ; not interfering with the ordinary action of the day, only keeping it at a higher level. Life is what the blossom is to the fruit. If bright and healthy, it gives that character to the fruit ; if weak and sickly, the fruit is tasteless, or withers. At a certain time they are separated, and only one remains ; the other has seemingly passed away as if it had not been. But it is not so ; the blossom has sent its sap and subtle chemistry into the fruit, and life has sent its deeds, virtues, vices and moral chemistry into the ' Hereafter.'

There is no escape. It is the penalty, or the recompense of birth, as it may be received. Common opinion fixes on death as the penalty or the decree. By no means. Death, as man is constituted, is simply the necessary, inevitable result of the gradual loss of physical power, heralded by old age and decrepitude in those most favoured with constitutional strength, *Mors janua vitæ*. Intermediate deaths do not touch the question. They arise from special causes—violence, disease, weakness of constitution, and are not in the ordinary course of nature ; but given the longer life, Man, like

all other animate creation, decays and dies. Death, like life, is a mystery insoluble to reason. It may, or may not be a sleep ; it may be a state of consciousness ; it may be unconscious. It has been left undecided, and either view may be held at will. Many examples of both have been scattered through the Scriptures, giving freedom to choice. A third view has been laid open to us, not as example, but as a specialty, in two persons who are on record in the Old Testament as having left earth for heaven without the intermediate state of death.

The first, Enoch, cannot strictly be received as a historical character in connection with his surroundings. He was a righteous man, living probably in an evil age ; for it is written that ‘ he walked with God,’ in contradistinction to those of his own age who did not walk with God. But all that is known of his life is comprised in his age—365 years—and its consummation. It is said that ‘ God took him.’ The phrase is peculiar, and is the more remarkable as coming in the midst of a long list of patriarchs to all of whom, without exception, is applied the formula, ‘ and he died.’ A common interpretation marks it as expressing an assumption into heaven while in

life. The interpretation, though common, is not absolute, nor wholly convincing.

It is said, too, of Moses, when he went up to die on 'the top of Pisgah,' and died, 'according to the word of the Lord,' that He (the Lord) 'buried him in a valley of the land of Moab over against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.' True, the cases are not wholly parallel, nor can any argument be soundly formed upon that of Moses; still, they show a special intervention of God in the case of two of His favoured servants at the close of their career.

The second example alluded to is the ascent of Elijah into heaven on a whirlwind, and fiery light, and blaze of glory set forth by the figure of a chariot and horses of fire. It was in the view of the prophet Elisha, and is received on his testimony. These cases are in every way exceptional, not only in the transition without death, but in the anticipation, or the prætermision of the future judgment of souls.

The first recorded case of a soul recalled to earth after death is that of Samuel at Endor. It is not stated whether or not from a state

of consciousness—presumably so, by his power of foretelling the death of Saul and his sons on the morrow at Gilboa; though not decisively, as he might have been aroused from his sleep in the grave, and have been gifted with that knowledge at the time. His remonstrance to Saul may be interpreted either way: ‘Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?’

An instance by implication is found in the death of David’s infant son. In justifying himself to his servants for a conduct which was beyond their mind and comprehension he made use of an expression remarkable in that age: ‘I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.’ It may be thought that he would scarcely have said, ‘I shall go to *him*,’ if he had imagined the child to have been asleep in his grave, and that he himself should be cast into a like sleep, when the breath should have parted from him; but it is inconclusive.

A direct instance is recorded in the noble life of the prophet Elijah, when the son of the poor widow, who had showed him kindness in a sore strait, both of the prophet and herself, fell sick and died. Elijah took him into a room apart, and prayed to the Lord for his

restoration to life. The prayer was heard; but so short a time had intervened between the death and the revival that the point in question must be left undecided.

A similar restoration to life was accomplished by the prophet Elisha on the son of the Shunamite; but, as in the former instance of the miracle recorded of Elijah, the interval was only of a few hours—too few for any approach to a decision.

The same reason holds in a most striking event after the prophet's death. It is thus recorded: As they were burying a man a band of hostile Moabites appeared in sight, 'and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha; and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood upon his feet.' As in the former instance, no solid theory can be raised upon it, and so with the other cases, it must be left undetermined.

In the New Testament we reach teaching and examples of a more precise and arguable character. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus we are led to believe that the souls of the saved and the lost are not only conscious, but retain an interest in those who are

dear to them, and whom they have left on earth. Lazarus is consoled; he has left no kindred behind. Dives, with all his human senses alive within him, is not only tortured by memories of past luxuriousness in contrast with present suffering, but with anxiety for his five brethren yet alive.

Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, was raised from a death sleep by our Lord. Nothing can be more precise than the language He used: 'Our friend Lazarus *sleepeth*; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep.'

St. Paul also teaches sleep after death in a direct and remarkable manner when he says: 'We shall not all sleep; but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump'; and also in 1 Thessalonians, when he speaks of the dead as 'asleep,' and as 'sleeping in Jesus'; and this, not in any allegorical, or other kindred sense, but with exactitude as a received fact in the early Christian Church.

We may go back from the teaching of St. Paul to the recall in life of the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue. He thought she was dying, and besought the help of our Lord. Much people thronged Him, and as He

approached the house the servants of the Ruler came forth with the announcement that she was dead. Our Lord went on. As He entered the house the inmates 'wept and wailed greatly.' Our Lord said calmly: 'Why make ye this ado, and weep? The damsel is not dead, but *sleepeth*. They laughed Him to scorn, 'knowing that she was dead.' These latter words are most important, as showing the reality of the miracle; and equally so as likening death to a sleep.

Another miracle of the same character was performed by our Lord in the city of Nain on the person of a young man, whose funeral He met at the gate of the city. It is touchingly said, that he was 'the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.' He compassionated her in this greatness of her sorrow; and approaching the bier, caused the bearers to stop, and uttered those compelling words: 'Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.' He arose, and He delivered him to his mother. According to the Jewish mode of burial only a few hours could have intervened between the death and the revival.

In all the passages and cases which have been cited, there has been something of more

or less weight to interfere with the absolute decision which might resolve the question without appeal. The slightrness of the interval between death and life-restoration, with the exception of Lazarus, which was of four days, makes no sort of difference in the actual state of the departed. A restoration after a number of years, or lengthened period, might, perhaps, give more confidence in the formation of an opinion, but none such has been vouchsafed.

One instance still remains. Whether it may be of sufficient weight and value to override or crush the others must rest with the mind alone of the believer, for the simple reason that in all others he has to rely upon varying, not contradicting statements, and to make choice. It is the assurance to the malefactor on the Cross: 'To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.' It unquestionably denotes a state of consciousness in the malefactor. Our Lord assuredly did not sleep in the grave. That is conceded by all divines. It is also conceded that He went down to Hades—interpreted as the place assigned to departed souls; presumably the resting-place of all the souls that have ever lived. The intent of that going down must be in abeyance until the question of consciousness

or unconsciousness shall have been accurately determined.

One Apostle, St. Peter, is supposed to teach, that on giving up His life on the Cross He went down to the abode of souls to preach to them.

An Apostle's words should be received not only with humblest reverence, but with intensest care. In this doctrine of St. Peter two things must essentially be observed. If He went to preach, it must have been to convert, which is against that sternest of all flats, that there is no repentance in the grave. But *the time* when He 'went and preached to the spirits in prison' must also be observed. It was 'in the days of Noah, while the Ark was a-preparing.' That removes it at once from our Lord's three days, and, apparently, relegates it to inspired prophets and teachers in the long interval between the command to build and the completion of the Ark.

The question is thus in a manner balanced. The wisdom of the faith of man cannot decide it. It is not a question for much writing, or deep writing. It lies on the surface and chiefly appeals, in the simplicity of narration, to the common-sense of the believer.

Tabulated, it stands thus :

Enoch.	}	conscious.
Elijah.		
Dives.		
Malefactor.		

Lazarus raised.	}	sleep.
St. Paul's Last Day		
and		
Thessalonians.		

The rest undecided.

One thing alone is certain. Death is not an eternal sleep. The principle of life—Christianly, the soul—leaves the body of flesh, and, without dying, passes into another and unknown state. That, its ultimate state, is the law, decree, penalty of a man's birth—his Hereafter. It is a truth marked in all ages of man's existence with such undeviating regularity, and with such slight tribal exceptions, as to be almost universal. Life is not confined to earth. It continues.

The religions of the world from remotest times are known to be as varied as the nations which upheld them ; but they agree under some form of belief in a future state. Some are great in design, deep in mystery, and enshrined in the Priesthood ; many are crude ; many debased, cruel, sensual, mostly the prolongation of the

present life in a supposedly higher and more perfect form. The manifestation of this belief has appeared at times under singular variations. The warrior of old, as everyone knows, was buried in his armour, and his horse was slaughtered on his tomb—a remarkable instance of belief in the resuscitation of the animal creation, though probably only in the individual necessities of warriors—but the belief would also be shared by the mourners, if not by their countrymen at large, and would probably be applied to their own favourites of the lower creation.

The barbarian monarch was accompanied by his slain wives, and a bodyguard to minister to him with equal state and glory beyond the grave.

The savage African king, or powerful chief, was escorted by hundreds of slaves or captives taken in war, as a testimony to his greatness in life, or a sacrifice of propitiation to his gods. The North American Indian was buried with all the accompaniments of the chase—his bow, his spear, his hunting-knife and his dogs—with the assured prospect of a perpetual existence on the happiest of hunting-grounds. Whether with spectre-hounds and chase, or spirit-victims of earthly sport is doubtful. In short, it is

common knowledge that all tribes and peoples have inherited somewhat of the same belief, ranging from a recognition of the 'Great Spirit' down to fetish-worship, and the propitiation of demons.

Whence this universal belief or expectation? The answer commonly is in one of these two forms: It was Divinely inspired from the beginning, or it was generated from Man's instinctive longings and aspirations. There is an apparent contradiction in the two, which should be looked to.

When the human race, in Christian belief, spread abroad over the earth from their common centre, they carried with them an absolute faith in a future life, and a knowledge derived from God Himself. The human race, in that belief, sprang from a single pair, and began life—cast forth on the world without help, counsel, experience, art or science of any kind, reliant on their own resources. In that belief the theories of Man's early life, as upheld by high science, fall completely in with Christian belief. The ape theory began with a single ape-man, not with a special tribe of converting apes.

We learn from Genesis, that from a pair roughly clothed with skins, arts, sciences,

cities, governments, and communities were gradually developed. We read in history that mankind slowly progressed from the rudest implements to lake-dwellings, and thence in the course of ages into the first process of civilized life.

In this point of fact they agree. The Almighty cast forth the first pair in wrath—to use the world's word—on the destruction of His purposes in the creation, and left them without guidance to make their way in the world as they best could. Hence the long ages of wild, uncivilized flint-life, until by their energy, experience, and gradual recovery of brain-power they rose into a mode of civilized life, and into the restoration of God's favour as well.

The episode of Cain in the land of Nod may be objected to this view. It may also be objected that the early chapters of Genesis are not historical. They are not. Still, the progress of arts, sciences, cities and governments as revealed through Cain in Genesis were true, only they were developed in far later ages.

In Christian belief, then, Man went forth into the world with a knowledge of God, the soul, and the future life in its highest form. Agnostic science has no means of accounting for the first

intimation of God and religion in the mind of historic Man, any more than the time of his evolution, and from its own showing—yielding for the moment to its own theory—it cannot prove by evidence to the contrary, that God did not take that time and method of introducing Man *in a certain sequence* into the world; and if so, that He did not impart into the minds of the race, as they became developed, the scintilla of a knowledge of Himself. Wild theory! but theories, however wild, must not be met with silence.

It is enough for Christian belief that when Man was sent forth from the Divine Presence he acknowledged and worshipped God. He might, in common reason and in common affection, have imparted that knowledge to his children. What, though, is more probable than that the first impressions, however deeply engraven, should grow fainter from time and distance as families multiplied, and that much of original knowledge should be wholly and hopelessly lost. We have no reason to believe that the lands into which those early pioneers penetrated were different from what experience tells of other uncultivated lands—abounding in forest, wild animals, and fruits; hill and dale; rivers—wanting toil and industry. And as time

went on, and population increased, the hardships consequent on emigration, settlement, means of subsistence, the cares and privations of a hard life might greatly have bound down the thoughts to the necessities of the day, and sternly kept them there. Thus, Inspiration in its highest sense might have partially died out ; but have left in its place an instinctive feeling—stronger probably in fear than in hope at first, but true in its nature, and true in its development. The one followed the other, unconsciously conjoined with it.

The motives, reasonings, doubts and probabilities on a future life in modern times are not in question. They are complex and of subtle ingenuity ; not always lucid. With these early tribes and nations scattered over the world it was a single idea—direct, compelling, unreasoning, branching out into as many forms as there were tribes—almost as there were people in them, through individual superstition. But fear and an indefinable dread were the chief incentives. Storms, and other damaging external agencies ; murrains amongst cattle, and epidemics amongst men were attributed at once unhesitatingly to demoniacal powers—the more dreaded because undefined. They led, and gave material to a belief in a future ; but it was

one of secret terror. Darkness was the supposed reign of ghosts, malefic influences and demons. They fled at dawn; they reigned supreme at night. That has been the common experience of explorers in savage lands. The religion, if it may be so called, centred in propitiation by sacrifice.

Slaves were, and are, sacrificed in multitudes. Shed blood is the medium of mercy to the slayers. The Good Spirit was acknowledged, but was invariably held to be the weaker. The Dark Powers have been propitiated with the offerings of sons and nearest blood in the belief that a favourable answer would be given corresponding with the preciousness of the offering. The King of Moab (2 Kings iii.) in his great distress slew his son on the wall of his besieged city, an offering to his gods in barbaric-civilized times. In Grecian civilized history more than one Iphigenia has been slain, or offered up, in propitiation to adverse Deities. Degraded worship, and degraded humanity; but it gives substance to that striking saying of St. Paul that God never left Himself 'without witness'—darkened, obscured, debased—but never lost.

It is universally admitted by divines and

historians that Asia was the cradle of the human race. The earliest settled and religious Governments were in Asia, and the adjoining territory of Egypt. Their inner religious systems, grand as they were in first conception, have to modern ideas a strong tinge of barbarism, overladen with superstitions, subtleties, and incongruities ; a worship—almost a deification—of animals down to the lowest class, with strange mystic rites, and on the Indian side with impossible Avatars. But they guarded and fenced in, as a sacred trust, the one dominant secret of the life of the soul in a future state.

In all these systems there were two religions—the religion of the Priests and the initiated, and the religion of the people. The first were led through secret and subtle rites into a full assurance of the soul, and a future life ; the second were taught by carved images, signs, sacred animals, and symbols. In an after-age the same secret truth, drawn from Egyptian Priests, was taught in the Eleusinian and other mysteries. The gods and goddesses, Charon and Rhadamanthus, mainly drawn also from Egypt, were for the common people ; the wise and thoughtful, though with crude notions for the most part on the soul and inner spirit of

a man, had a philosophical and enlightened belief in an after-life.

But these things may be left, and an approach be made to a more solid ground. The first authentic written history with a regulated sequence of men and events begins with the Scriptural account of Abraham. All that has been written as existing before—to sum up many ideas in a single word—is traditional. Ages on ages had passed, unrecorded, unknown, tens of thousands of years before. Cities were built, and peoples flourished under government and laws; but government and laws have perished; their history is a blank: it has not come down to us.

When Abraham went down to Egypt he found a kingdom long and firmly established, and with the inner doctrine of a future life deeply engrained in it. He found a Faith in substance like his own, but with this great difference, that the treasure, which they possessed and held in secret, he openly proclaimed and lived in. It is not to be supposed that he gained anything from his sojourn in Egypt. His knowledge was from a higher source; and yet it is interesting, as showing independently a firm and settled policy ages on ages before

his own 'call.' That knowledge he bequeathed subsequently to his sons; and through them to their descendants; and so on to the unhappy sufferers in the 400 years' captivity in Egypt until the time of Moses. Whether, or in what degree, the true Faith was retained by them in those hard-lived years, and how far it fell off in the severities of their latter portion, it is simply hopeless to inquire.

A passing thought, judging from their regrets, obstinacy, and idolatrous leanings in the wilderness, might lead to a notion that whatever their knowledge, it was very lightly held by them; and that in their gradual fall from favour and prosperity into brick-workers, they had been, more or less, inoculated with the gaudy splendours of Egyptian worship. However that may be, nothing can well be more certain than this, that the religion of Abraham was the solid ground of the faith and religion of Moses. That, to anyone who believes in the existence of the great Lawgiver, is beyond controversy. He not only inherited the belief of the Father of the Faithful, but, as a side support, he was also 'learned' in all the secret wisdom of the Egyptians.

But here a very important question arises: Did Moses express his belief in a future state

in the writings attributed to him? Did he embody it as a motive or deterrent in the Levitical and moral Law?

Two authors of note in their time contended that the Pentateuch gives no sanction to the hopes and fears of the future, but is restricted to the present life.* It has been widely debated since; but the argument is wholly negative. It is assumed throughout that because the stress of a future life was not enforced, or interwoven into his Laws, Moses either did not believe it, or that he thought the terrors of the present were more suited to, and would have sterner influence over, his people than, to their minds, the Hereafter.

As it has been said, too much stress must not be laid on the example of Enoch, as recorded by Moses. On the supposition that he was translated, the whole doubt or difficulty on the future falls to the ground. It is enough to draw attention to it. As an argument it may stand aside.

One only passage can be found throughout the Laws of Sinai in which there is any direct intimation of a future life, and that is very far from a clear one. Undoubtedly, it was believed, as it has been said, by Abraham, by

* Warburton and Graves.

Isaac, and Jacob, and the twelve Patriarchs. Equally, that it was contained and revealed in the account and description of Eden, in the words, 'And now, lest he put forth his hand, and eat, and live *for ever*; therefore,' etc.

It matters not how or whence that description was derived. It is there. At its greatest, or at its least, it expresses the most ancient faith of the world, drawn from the most ancient sources, that there is a life 'for ever.' The words are allegorical and mystic, and so open to varied interpretation; but their sense is clear, and undeniably points to a future, or continued existence.

The passage above alluded to is in Leviticus xx. : 'Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech, he shall surely be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones; and *I will set My face against that man; and I will cut him off from among his people.*'

The man is dead as a temporal punishment, and yet the Lord will set His face against him, and will cut him off. When? In the future. That is precise, and is so held by modern Rabbis, by one of whom it was pointed out to the writer. It must be confessed, though, that

it is not very powerful, and wholly unable of itself to overthrow the opponents of that view. But it has a meaning.

It ought, though, in fairness to be said that a judgment, which may, perhaps, bear the same meaning, though not so obviously, is denounced eleven times in Leviticus in these terms : ‘ That soul shall be cut off from among his people.’ It is not said, as in Leviticus xx., that he should be stoned, or be put to death in any way, but only that the man who should commit certain sins should be cut off from among his people. It is putting no great constraint on Scripture to apply these passages to the future ; but it *is* a constraint, unless the sinner is to be stricken with misfortune or death. The faithful people shall be saved, *he* shall be cut off.

Whether the people in Moses’ time received these passages in this light may be open to argument, but not to decision. During many after-ages all Divine judgments were merged, in opinion, with those tremendous Deuteronomic curses on disobedience, which were avowedly temporal on the nation at large, but uncertain as regarded individual acts of sinfulness. The question is a large one, and will never be wholly solved. May not a partial

solution lie in this direction?—that the author of the Pentateuch, or authors, took the recognition of a future life for granted as an *elementary belief*, popularly and universally received, and, therefore, did not think it necessary to enforce it by special enactments.

We cannot suppose that they disbelieved in a future life, and yet believed that angels—as to Abraham—came down from heaven to interest themselves in the affairs of men, but with whom they had no further concern than to save them from some passing evil, or to guide them through it, and then return to heaven, and look down upon them with no other care or feeling. Their intervention would, at the least, show a common interest and inter-communion with them. When Jacob dreamed of the angels on the ladder of prayer into heaven, did he rise in the morning in the full belief that the dream was Divinely sent without thought of inter-communion with them? Scarcely.

In regard to Moses, he was surrounded by a people, a large portion of whom were craving for idolatrous rites, which of themselves might be supposed to have some reference to a future, and who were opposing, and almost defying, the Divine Governance. They were continually

breaking forth into courses which would inevitably bring down heavy judgments upon them, and he gave them an elaborate body of laws on every conceivable subject, sanctioned and impressed by terrible temporal penalties on disobedience to them. He knew that with such a gross-minded people as those with whom he had to deal the fear of present suffering would have far more effect than the threat of future woes. He therefore might have left the future alone as existent in general belief, and have drawn down their thoughts to the stern and—if such an expression may be used—the relentless denunciation of sins against the Majesty of God, and the welfare of the nation in the present life, leaving the corresponding severity of a future judgment to be implied. It would be beyond probability that, believing in the future himself, he should have restrained the penalties of idolatry, disobedience, and other deadly sins to the present life alone, unless he had known that the people had shared his belief, however loosely.

If it had been a new and unreceived point of religion, he must have opened and enforced it. He could not have suffered the people whom he guided, taught, governed with singularly autocratic power, whose destiny, in his own

knowledge of the future, he held in his hand, to wander and go astray into perdition, while they thought they had only given way to sins for which a thorough pardon and atonement had been provided by the rites, ceremonies, and offerings of their religion. It would have made him mediately a slayer of their souls. His silence seems, in that regard, conclusive, since it was not only the code of moral law that he was pressing on them with such absolute insistence, but a religious body of decrees and ordinances and expiations of such severity, that it was acknowledged to be utterly impossible that any man living could act up to them. Is it conceivable that the religious section was only given to add greater weight to the moral section, and that in the end they were to be of no more account than 'the beasts that perish'?

It was a faithless and stubborn generation under the guiding hand of Moses himself, and in all probability the great truth of the 'Hereafter' languished in the troubles and turmoils which arose in, and subsequent to, the settlement in Canaan; and especially in the long, as received, years of anarchy under the Judges, when 'every man did that which was right in his own eyes.' Let it be supposed to have been set aside for the more pressing interests of the day,

forgotten, lost. Sad if true; but not improbable in those early times. Let it be so; for if lost, it was fully recovered under Samuel.

The whole of that Judgeship—a very special Judgeship—presupposes in all its varied incidents, decisions, and rule, a future reckoning to the adversaries of the Lord's will. The election of Saul as their king was effected under a covert threat of the future, softened by the intercession of the prophet.

But, passing that, the future was acknowledged—emphasized—in the sight and to the capacity of the whole people when David said of his child, 'I shall go to him.' The lowliest of his subjects must have understood an allusion so plain as that. And so it was that, from that time, through the whole range of the Kings and Prophets, the life of the future was an integral part of the national creed.

It were well if a nation's creed included all the component parts of a nation, a millennial state of things only to be looked for at a long distance, if ever. It is sad to think that there is no known religion in any country of the world without its opposing sectaries, agnostics, and unbelievers. The Jews of old had their Sadducees, and the Sadduceean spirit has descended to modern times. Mahometanism

has its Sonnites and Shiites; India its Brahminism and Buddhism; Christianity its East and West; and so on through all the religious history of the world, from the earliest to the latest times. The Sadducee denied angel, spirit, future life, and everything that was above the common order of Nature. That extreme, too, unhappily lives in modern times amongst ourselves; but it has been as yet the madness, comparatively, of a few.

Fortunately, too, the animosity has been chiefly urged on secondary issues; the opinions or convictions of great names, rather than deep searchings after truth, and so, for the moment, it may be passed, as not absolutely within the range of the present inquiry. Controversy, too, and arguments on the future have rested less on the Life itself, than on its concomitants, its promises, and its penalties—chiefly the latter. Heaven and its rewards do not jar; they are left alone. They may be true, or due to imagination, and so they have been but lightly touched. Objectors are content to leave that state untouched, without hazarding present conjectures on it; and so its promises are either tacitly received, or passed without discussion. The penalties stir up a far different spirit, and are unhesitatingly rejected,

as something too horrible and revolting to be entertained.

It is thoroughly illogical. They are parts of one design. If both are rejected—well, that opens a view to be considered and discussed apart. If one be acknowledged, it inevitably draws the other with it; they stand or fall together. If there be a future life, as has been said, it is a gift to Humanity, to all men—imperative and forced upon all men. It is no special gift to one class or order of men, not even to the most holy, righteous, and just; it is a gift to all. Its manner of reception is alone at choice and will.

No religious system ever invented would maintain that both classes were to enter into a state of perpetual happiness on the sole ground of their common Humanity, and the free gift of life. It would contradict every principle of justice, morality, and common-sense that ever existed. Life would cease to be a probation; it would become a farce. The wrong-doer, after a supposable extent of vice, cruelty and wickedness, would pass hand-in-hand with the victim wrong-sufferer into endless bliss. Life would be in very truth a transition state; little more than ‘a tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing.’ A distinction,

or separation is inevitable, modified by mercy and forgiveness afterwards. Of that we know nothing; nothing has been revealed, and conjecture is scarcely a degree above folly.

In life it is different. Our Lord frequently forgave great sins while on earth with a word. Always without inquiry, and, as it might *seem* to unreflecting minds, without knowledge of the previous life and its deeds, except on such general principles that the object of His clemency had been guilty of many sins. But, then, there was a remainder of life for repentance.

A man sick of the palsy is brought to Him, 'lying on a bed,' as He was embarking into a ship to pass over to His own city. He saw the faith of the friends and relations who brought him, and said at once, 'Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.' He might have known preternaturally the past life of the palsied, though it does not appear. His sins might have been light, as the world counts lightness; it is not said. At all events, as soon as our Lord saw that the sinner had faith, He forgave all without inquiry. Sins may hereafter be in like manner forgiven. It is not in our power to forecast; but in all cases

forgiveness must be necessary from the least to the greatest.

Heaven is not entered by right. The Divine Law hereafter may be modified on considerations known only to the Judge. In Scripture, as given for our choice, the separation and consequent judgments are as strong, marked, and decisive as language can make them. There is no compromise; no yielding to the tenderness of human feelings, except on repentance, and sorrow, and contrition of heart. Without those the Law has stood, stands, and will stand in all its force and sternness. Death closes at one blow Hope and Repentance; certainty alone remains.

It is true, that like all other Laws and Decrees, the Law of God in Christ may be subject to interpretation—but interpretation drawn from the same source, not from human ideas of right and wrong, and so independent of it. We can draw a soothing analogy from human laws without harm, if we so please, which in some cases are of an extreme severity; but which are often lightened, and sometimes set aside in pardon. But it is just in that direction that the danger lies. Half our ideas of what God is, and what God is to do, are made

up of what men would do in a similar case.* It is in the too free introduction of human prepossession, founded on opinion alone; or in a tenderness which shrinks from intense or protracted suffering. We see that continually in a lower degree in the almost inevitable petitions for pardon, or mitigated sentences on our most atrocious criminals. They spring up on no reasoning principle; not to warn; not to reclaim; but to spare; and so to satisfy philanthropic instincts. But this sentiment is intensified a thousand-fold when led on from human laws to the judgment denounced on sin in the future. Not that it is any wonder that we shudder at it. The threats in their strict, uncompromising simple language are without contradiction terrible, dreadful, and beyond any conception of endurance in any form of spiritual body. Hence arose the softening influence of Purgatory; it gave hope to the worst sinners; but it did a greater thing: it covertly offered an inducement to the Christian world at large to receive in faith the fires of eternity. Purgatory presupposes them.

* As the great Condé wrote of the reformers and scribblers of his own time: 'Ces coquins nous font parler et agir comme ils eussent parlé et agi eux-mêmes à notre place.'

It is a forced doctrine. There is no sound authority for it in any part of Scripture; far from it—so far, that it is in direct and palpable contradiction to the whole of our Lord's teaching and declarations. It was Papal tenderness combined with policy—or the reverse. The motive is open; mostly given to policy; but that there was a special motive independent of Scripture, when the doctrine was first laid open and given to the faith of men, is beyond opinion.

Modern thought leaves that untouched, and treads on other ground; it prefers to give a different translation and a restricted meaning to the word *αἰώνιον*, 'everlasting'; substituting for it an age of uncertain duration. It is twice used in St. Matthew xxv. in the same verse, and is translated as 'everlasting' and 'eternal.' 'And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.' We might be content with the usual interpretation of the passage, whatever other sense might be given to it elsewhere, for if the denounced punishment be not everlasting, the reward of the saved is not everlasting either, since the same word fixes on and determines both. And so, strictly speaking, by modern interpretation the punishment and the happi-

ness after a certain time must end together, and death and annihilation become the fate of both. Are believers prepared for this? The answer very likely would be that the supposition was absurd. Why? It is declared by our Lord that both shall be alike. Yes; but human opinion or prepossession is against it. What is that opinion worth? The interpretation is utterly unauthorized by context, and on one side comes perilously near a species of expiation by the duration and amount of punishment.

Another form of solution is hazarded in the supposition that there will be an eternity for the soul, but that God's mercy will triumph over all in the end; and that the soul of the guiltiest criminal that ever lived will be pardoned after a time—sublimated, purified; and so that heaven will be the ultimate destiny of all. That opinion necessarily presupposes certain terms and limits of suffering and punishments varying with the character and enormities of past sin. The wicked are not to be pardoned at once, they are to be released by degrees, according to the measure of their iniquities; and released in such a manner, that mercy shall go hand in hand with terms of torment; Purgatory under another form.

Is there a single word in the whole of Scripture to authorize such an idea? ‘*Cœlum ipsum petimus stultitiâ.*’ We give laws to God. We assume His functions. We make Him act by the Condé thesis as ourselves would have acted in His place. We ascribe to Him a Median Law in Scripture, which is again and again repeated by our Lord and His Apostles—a law pitiless and unchangeable—and then revolt against it. We know absolutely nothing of the mode, nothing of the process, the scene, the time in which the souls of men will be judged, beyond what is to be gleaned from a few parables and incidental allusions. We know the broad principles in the separation of sinners from the just; the rest at its best and wisest is only conjecture, interpreted by the humanitarian bias of individual minds.

Imagination will have its own way; and opinions will be formed on the unknown as well as on the clearest known, as long as the world shall last. But imagination may still be accompanied by a very forcible Scriptural expression once used on a very remarkable occasion, ‘That the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee; shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?’ We have reason to infer, were it only from our Lord’s

action towards sinners on earth, that Judgment hereafter will be tempered with mercy. Indiscriminate mercy is not just, whether immediate or protracted for years, or ages ; it is making the wicked to be as the righteous. We may believe in degrees of happiness, degrees of exaltation. We may believe that men scarcely saved will not be received hereafter as the men of holiest lives, martyrs and confessors to the faith. That was implied in the mother's petition for her two sons, and in the 'many mansions.' It was admitted by our Lord that the exalted position would be 'given to them for whom it is prepared.' More directly, perhaps, was it intimated in the parables of the five talents and the ten cities, in both of which the reward was not only proportioned to the extent of the work, but to the limit of the opportunities.

The great end, after all, of these modern objections, to sum them up in a single word, is to get rid of the term 'Hell' in its ordinary acceptation, as a place of eternal fire, presided over by Satan, the Prince of Evil. It is terror to timid minds ; regarded with awe, but fearlessly by men of religious lives ; and braved, denied, or scorned by avowed sinners, or the philoso-

phically disobedient. Objections to it of various kinds are periodically set forth with assurance and incompleteness. They are answered; checked; and then revive. They assert much; they prove nothing. As thus: 'It is horrible to think of, and therefore cannot be.' Opinion! nothing else. The whole argument, greatly insisted on in modern times, is wholly negative. A favourite argument, but remotely allied to sound conclusions.

It is so in other things. Some of our foremost men of science argue that the world is self-existent, not created. A negative argument. It cannot be proved. They may write on till Doomsday, they will not prove it. Their wisest writings only amount, after all, to a more or less subtle hypothesis.

Others discuss the Being, nature, and attributes of a Creator. It is fruitless. His very existence is wholly beyond the power of unaided reason. A future life is scientifically upheld; it is scientifically opposed; both are equally beyond the reach of human intellect and science, and so is the possession, the very existence of a soul. How, on scientific grounds, can you prove the existence of a soul? It is scientifically an impossibility. If not a soul, how a future life? If neither soul nor a future life.

where is the difference, except in degree, from the elephant to the man, or the mole to the elephant? In very truth our true, solid, reliable knowledge lies within a very small compass. Life, death, and the earth on which we breathe are only certainties from reason. Nothing beyond. The rest, however grateful to the mind and absorbing as well, is, however entitled, only an exercise of the faculties, not an end.

You can prove works; they exist in suns, stars, animal and vegetable life. You can prove the motions of the heavenly bodies; foretell eclipses; pronounce the rising and setting of the sun, moon, planets, and fixed stars, and even the tides all over the world to a second. Good among other sciences, and great. But until you can prove a beginning from eternity—*i.e.*, a beginning for God, or a motive cause—you simply strive at an impossibility, all metaphysics to the contrary.

Happily we have a record to which all questions of this high spiritual nature can be referred by men of teachable minds; not a single record, or the product of a single age, but one stretching over two thousand years, from Abraham to the death of our Lord. Does one realize the value and meaning of that

unit and his three ciphers? The whole of our English history from William the Conqueror, roughly, is only one half of it; it is a record of patriarchs, judges, prophets, evangelists, apostles, and men of different laws, customs, religion; of different habits and modes of expression; in high prosperity, and the lowest fortune; victorious at one time over all enemies, at another crushed; their country laid waste, and the whole nation carried forcibly away under a seventy years' captivity, but all clinging tenaciously throughout to the great verity of a future life, and the immortality of the soul.

Modern pride of intellect and progress in acquired knowledge of all conceivable kinds—which even a half-century ago might almost have seemed an impossibility—turns back with contemptuous glances on the men of old times. Let it be so. Assumption is not always wisdom, and it may also, fortunately, be considered that perseverance in error does not lighten it. We have much to contend with, not simply stated as a basis of truth, but garlanded with cunning phrase, and specious flowery rhetoric. So be it; but still it stands immovably, that any scheme, or system, or theory on these two great points, which may

be built up independently of that Book, is absolutely and utterly worthless, inasmuch as it must be founded on metaphysical, or other deductions alone on a subject in which it has not one single grain of independent testimony or information. Let it be said, at the risk of repetition, that there is nothing in the whole round and course of Nature to show a future life. The grandest forest trees live their allotted time, die, decay, and form pabulum for succeeding forest trees. The tiniest wild weed does precisely the same. Animals, from the noblest to the most insignificant, have a life of their own, greatly internecine, but give no intimation of a life beyond the present. In their case a serious difficulty arises. Where are we to draw a line of separation? Given the probability from reason, of elephants, lions, and the higher class of animals, we can scarcely admit bats and shrewmice, scarcely sharks and the lesser inhabitants of the seas.

Again, can we conceive a future life without a soul? On what rational ground can we conceive the lower creation to possess one? And so let it be said once more, that without the Bible and Revelation the soul itself is a mere conjecture; and a man has no more right to assume a future life, or the possession of a

soul, than he has to assign it to the animals which come nearest to himself in mind, memory, affection, and instinct—leaving others untouched. The arguments and conclusions of free-thinkers, pursued to their end, are little more than criticisms on a Book which they hold in no estimation, and, indeed, for the most part regard as spurious, as far as Divine communication is within it.

It is not, however, these alone that we have to consider. We have a vast body of believers to consider as well: those in whom faith is not equal; those who, weak in reasoning power, live in a blind faith; those who are at times awed by the audacity of scientists and metaphysicians, and who, though feeling that they have strong reasons for the faith that is within them, are depressed and thrust back from an inability to give adequate language to their thoughts.

There are these and others who, though true and loyal believers, are yet liable to be disturbed by the controversies around them. These controversies do not shake belief; they disturb it, and give pain. For in true belief questions will arise—not adverse in any way, but unassured—giving substance to thought without clear decision. It is good that they

should arise, for they serve to give a reason for the faith which is within. Among these may be classed one of the deepest interest, which has caused, and causes still, a species of undefined dread—the Eternity of Punishment. It jars, confronts the love, the mercy, the long-suffering, and goodness of the God they have been taught to love for those great qualities. Received, it is with reluctance; acknowledged, it is, as it were, in secret; while in the midst of us there are Pastors and Guides who make it not only a prominent part of their exhortations, but a solid doctrine of their Creed. Hell with its fires is enforced by them as a stimulant to a good life. Where Love fails, Fear is to succeed. It is base, unworthy of a Christian man to the full extent of language; but it exists, and more than exists—it flourishes. It enters into the secrecies of family life, and causes many a warm heart to tremble for the future of those most dear to it.

There is absolutely *no ground* for it—an assertion which has to be proved.

It will be seen that a serious controversy thus arises, to be approached with infinite care and profound reverence. A false step, or careless error, would be fatal to the writer, and

might also do more harm to others than a direct sin by an attempt to unsettle a great question long implicitly received, and solidly fixed as true. It might cause hesitation, wrong thoughts and doubt, and sow broadcast the evil seed of Laodicea in unstable minds.

It is in the New Testament that Satan *first appears* as the minister appointed, or self-appointed, of eternal Punishment. He comes forth thence in a totally new character. His powers are not only enlarged, but are extended over a fresh field of action unrecognised, unknown before. The Satan of the Old Testament was wholly restricted to do evil upon earth and to embroil Man with his Creator. He had in men's religious belief nothing at all to do with the future. There is not *one single instance* in the Old Testament in which his influence is supposed, or in any possible way enabled, to act upon the future. Not one. Let it be repeated, *not one* is recorded in the Bible. Let it, too, be carefully remembered.

His first recorded appearance was in disguise as the Serpent in Eden. His hope of success lay in the perfection of that disguise, and the locality favoured it. The early chapters of Genesis are confessedly allegorical, mystic,

and so far unhistorical. They are to be brought down to intelligent fact by interpretation. His object was to induce Man to glide into sin, and so, by causing disappointment and failure of purpose, to draw down upon himself the anger of his Creator. His warfare was against God, not against Man. That is a fact which should never be forgotten. He cared not for Man; Man was nothing to him, except as an instrument of rebellion or controversy with God. He made no account of the soul, if indeed he had any conception of it in that new Creation. His attack was on the gift, or supposed blessing, of knowing good and evil in life. He left the future alone, and passed by the tree from which a man might 'eat and live for ever.' If the Temptation of the Tree of Knowledge had failed, he might have led Eve's thought and desire to the higher gift or acquisition. We know not. He was wholly content with his earthly life's success.

Take Eden as an allegory, or take it as a verity thinly disguised, one thing in either case is absolutely certain. The sole object and aim of the Serpent was to induce sin; nothing beyond. Sin effected, he escaped under a penalty and heavy judgment. Whether satisfied with the evil he had brought on the new Creation or

not, *he* was not the appointed instrument to inflict punishment on the sinners. He fled from Eden in haste and disgrace, and was not heard of in any way whatever in Bible history during some three thousand years. Not in person, not even in allusion, or any name by which he might be recognised or known for three thousand years. He had nothing to do with Cain; nothing with the sinners, his descendants; nothing with 'the giants' in evil or their progenitors; nothing with the whole world of sinners, who were overwhelmed in the Flood. His name never once occurs in the lawless, godless times which succeeded in the Judges, or in the early establishment of the kings of Israel; not until David. His influence is never, however remotely, intimated. It is as if his very name were unknown.

The evil he accomplished in Eden could not have been forgotten. If Adam had been reticent, Cain—and Abel in his degree—must have spread, and kept it alive in men's minds and memories. It might, indeed, seem to them to have been a single effort; and that, though partially triumphant, he might have been thought as too much crushed by the judgment passed on him to make a second, or even appear again in the world, and so they lived without fear of

the Serpent. It may be objected that his influence might have been put forth in secret. We have nothing to do with that ; our authority is the Bible, and that is wholly silent.

The magicians of Pharaoh may seem to some as an indication of his presence, but they can scarcely be regarded as his disciples or worshippers ; neither can their acts and wonders be entertained in any way as the work or instigation of Satan. They may be held as an indication of a popular belief in Magic, and as Magic presupposes a supernatural influence, a vague unexpressed thought of Satan may have existed. But that the Magicians of Egypt worked by his means is inconceivable, and out of the question. The miracles were ingenious and adroitly wrought, and were exhibited in an age of dark superstition, when supernatural gifts were received with a readiness and eagerness which scarcely find resemblance in the history of modern times. The Magicians' arts were hailed as supernatural, though the wonders which they wrought might be equalled, and, indeed, easily surpassed by our modern adepts. Some though, which were shown by Moses, were so avowedly beyond their compass that they did not attempt them.

It has been said by men of free thought that their opponent was only of greater force and ingenuity than themselves. It matters little what may be said. One thing is clear: the instigator on their side was not Satan, which is the only point of interest.

Pass from Egypt to the Wilderness. There were many atrocious sins committed by the Israelites in the Wilderness: golden calves, impious murmurings, distrust of God, overt rebellion, and a restless unbelieving spirit from the first dissatisfied thought to the report of the spies and the invasion of Canaan. But Satan, Satanic agency, or the very thought of Satan, was never once, apparently, in the mind of the people, though it might have given an easy solution of their persistency in evil. It was no longer 'the Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.' They bore their own sins and their penalty.

More wickedness, perhaps, was done, and recorded, in the times of the Judges than in any corresponding period in the history of Israel — wickedness atrocious in itself and open to argument as Satanic, had Satan been recognised. Not a word.

The duration of the Book of Judges is received as amounting to 250 years. Is not the conclusion inevitable that he was not known? or, if known, that he was not recognised as a Power?

We pass to the reign of Saul in the record of Samuel. An 'evil Spirit' is said, in its course, to have tormented and unhinged his mind, and made him subject to ungovernable fits of anger, which almost rose to insanity. Putting aside Oriental imagery, the malady is reduced to furious jealousy, envy, and anger against David, the openly proclaimed successor to the throne, and the consequent supplanter of his own sons. The history of the time makes that self-evident in his fierce invectives against David to his sons, backed by frequent attempts on his life, and banishment from his Court.

But even in this case Satan was not the disturbing 'Spirit'; for whatever the influence on Saul's mind might have been, and however wrought, he had nothing to do with it. It is expressly and markedly set forth in these terms: 'an evil Spirit *from the Lord* troubled him.' In other words, conscience and conflicting feelings arose within, and distracted him.

An implied intervention may be noticed in the raising of Samuel by the Witch of Endor. The Witch was supposed, in popular belief, to have wrought by help from the dark Powers. 'A witch,' in Exodus, was *ipso facto* to be put to death. However the word may be interpreted, it undoubtedly means one who resorted to unholy rites, and so, presumably, to Evil Spirits. But Satan was not named, nor is there the slightest intimation that, known only as 'the Serpent,' he *had* any Spirits under him. If we are to interpret Scripture, we must take Scripture chiefly in interpretation.

Something might be said on the reality of the apparition ; something on the mechanism by which apparitions were raised ; but it must stand as written, and then, at most, it only presupposes a power in Satan to raise the Shade of one departed. It shows nothing of an avenging power over sinful shades ; for Samuel was one of the purest and most devout examples in the Old Testament history.

It is not in wildest supposition to be thought that Samuel, after life, was with *him*. Whatever the raising may mean, it does not mean that the Spirit of Samuel was near, much less in the power and control of, Satan.

We may pass on to a direct Intervention in the succeeding reign of David. With his ambition and self-glorification, as the acknowledged head of the united kingdoms of Israel and Judah, from the simple youth 'tending the sheep,' we have nothing to do. It might have been the cause of his sin in the inner recesses of his mind, giving the lead to the temptation, or it might not. All we have to do with is the Scriptural declaration that he was tempted to number the people of Israel; a deadly sin against the written law of God, a sin, too, of which he was fully aware.

And here, too, a remarkable thing occurs. The temptation is recorded in the Book of Samuel and in the Chronicles, but with a totally different version. In the former it is said that 'the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and He moved David to number Israel and Judah.' In the latter it is stated that 'Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.' A different motive-power was ascribed by the two writers, which, at the most, in this instance, supposed an intervention of Satan as a mental force in the perversity of David's sin.

The two versions neutralize each other; but, assuming for the moment that the Chronicles

version is the right one, it adds no strength to the modern ideas of Satan. It has nothing whatever to do with him as an avenger of sin. His motive, as recorded, was, to all seeming, the same as in his Temptation of Eve; it was to lead the King into a criminal act, and to bring him under the wrath or displeasure of God.

The author of the Book of Samuel had no such idea; he attributed no such motive to him. The people had offended God, and David had also offended Him; and in the phraseology of the Old Testament, which attributed all unusual action to a foreign influence, David, rushing into a known sin, was said to be moved to do it by the Lord. He acted, nevertheless, by his own free thought and his own free will. Urged on by pride or self-glory, he resisted the strong remonstrances of Joab, who saw the greatness of the sin, and probably dreaded its consequences. But it was accomplished; and when the deed was done, David's heart smote him, because he had 'sinned greatly.'

The Chronicler, apparently, ascribed to him the motive which was in his own mind, irrespective of the Book of Samuel. However that might be, the sin was incurred. David numbered the people, and entailed on himself and

his subjects a heavy judgment, just as Adam had done in Eden.

There is, though, a notable parallel in the two cases. When either sin had been completed, Satan had nothing more to do. He was not the minister of judgment. David, by the mouth of the prophet Gad, was offered a choice of three expiations. He chose one. It was followed by the three days' pestilence throughout the land. Adam was left in the hands of the Lord, and so was David. All that Satan, by any interpretation, could do was to compromise the sinner—and leave him.

We hear no more of Satan in any shape or form whatever in the direct history of the Old Testament. Enormous sins were subsequently committed both by Kings and people, and very heavy judgments were passed on both, even to the seventy years' Captivity; but there is not the most distant allusion to Satan as the minister of future retribution, not even as the suggester of sin.

The same idea of restriction to the present life prevails in the majestic poem of Job. It is not historical, but it conveys the bias and sentiments of the writer, and probably of his age. License was conceded to Satan to de-

stroy his goods, to make him a beggar, and even to take the lives of his sons and his daughters. He was suffered to afflict him with boils and blains, and to put him to intense present torment; but there his destructive power was stayed. His life was safe; nor did there appear any intimation that, in the event of Job's integrity failing him, any other evil would befall him, except by the hand of the Almighty.

Neither did Satan seek from the Lord any other concession than the power and right to bring ruin upon him and his possessions, and to inflict torment on his person. He had no thought on the future. His only anticipation was, that in the deaths of his sons and daughters; in the utter loss of all his goods, and the severity of his own personal sufferings, he would lose all reverence for God, and incur mortal sin. The poem is not real, but imaginary. It has, though, this reality, that it expresses the belief of the time in Satan, and the restriction of his powers.

In Psalm cix.—generally, not universally, received as a dreadful prophetic denunciation against Judas—the writer heads a long list of the most terrible woes that could light on

man with the prayer, 'Let Satan stand at his right hand' to inflict them. But they all relate to this life alone, without any sort of intimation that they were to pass into the future, or that Satan had any influence beyond it. They followed the common ideas of the time. It may be held as certain that the writer, in the deadly virulence of his onslaught, would not have been contented even with these frightful temporal sufferings, if he had thought that Satan could have carried them into the future. He had no thought of any such possibility, and so restricted his maledictions to the traitor's life on earth.

In Zechariah, Satan is introduced under the form of a type in a vision, and so not strictly historical. Joshua, the High Priest—representative of the Church, which had fallen into corrupt and unholy ways—is portrayed as in a sinful state, 'clothed with filthy garments,' and standing before 'the angel of the Lord,' who had descended to remove them. Satan stands 'at his right hand to resist him'; but in vain. The typical garments are changed, and his purity restored. And then a most singular passage occurs. The angel, wishing to denounce the arrogance and presumption of

Satan, turns to him, and says, 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan,' raising him to the dignity of a remonstrant.

The whole vision, though, as has been said, is a type, mystical, with a subtle meaning, and interpretations may differ; but without much question the spirit of the passage, on the part of Satan, is resistance to the Lord on earth, with no reference whatever to the future.

It will be seen that throughout these passages, taken from Genesis to Malachi—and they are the only ones in which Satan is in any form personified—he wanders to and fro on the earth to incite rebellion against the Lord, as in Job, and to suggest sinful ambition, as in David. And he may be imagined as stirring up flames of discontent and unholy tendencies in the hearts of the multitude. That is the part that he plays in the Old Testament throughout. He is in the belief of those ancient times a crafty, malignant spirit, suffered by the inscrutable designs and mind, so to speak, of the Almighty to remain on earth, and as constantly scheming to frustrate His purposes, but always darkly and insidiously, as under the dread of a power too mighty to be openly withstood.

In Isaiah xiv. there is a highly poetical and figurative description of the Fall of Babylon, and the death of its King. The nations ground down and crushed by that tyrannical oppressor have rest. 'The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet.' Israel has triumphed. 'The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers.' In Hades there is much rejoicing. The great triumph of Israel by some means has been conveyed thither, and an imaginative, ironical reception is given to the King's Shade by those who have sunk into the grave before him. 'Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth.'

Hell in this passage is, of course, merely Hades, the supposed resting-place of the soul. Its inhabitants are in no suffering; they are simply in an expectant state, when they—oppressed and oppressors, conquered and rulers of nations—shall receive righteous judgment before the throne of the Almighty. In the thought of Isaiah the spirits of the dead are conscious; it is the Hell of the Apostles' Creed, and that only. The King is welcomed by the former great ones of the earth as participating their fate in death, and as being no

stronger than themselves. 'All they (the conquered kings and rulers) shall speak, and say unto thee: Art thou become like unto us?' No sort of physical torment is given or supposed, either to the oppressed in their own sins, or to the oppressor in his past tyranny. Satan does not appear. The soul of the oppressor King of Babylon is not subject to him in his wickedness; the souls of his victims—wicked or not—are utterly free from his presence.

Ezekiel, in chapter xxxii., takes up a lamentation for Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and pours forth by the mouth of the Lord a wail and lamentation over the fall of Egypt by the King of Babylon. He recurs to that lamentation a few days afterwards, and renews the wail over her fall. He then recounts a long catalogue of nations in alliance with Pharaoh, whose people have been 'slain with the sword,' but whose souls are in a state of consciousness. Pharaoh slain descends among them, and the prophet continues: 'The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of Hell with them that help him; they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword.' These passages, too, mean no more

than what David says in the Psalms: 'Thou shalt not leave my soul in Hell; neither shalt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption'; or the Creed which declares of Christ, that 'He descended into Hell.' And still one passage, more striking, if possible, than this last: 'If I climb up into heaven, Thou art there: if I go down to Hell, Thou art there also' (Ps. cxxxix.). We believe the Almighty to be Omnipresent. This verse assures it. But where is Satan?

All this may be received at will, either in a literal sense, or with a solid meaning under a figurative form. That greatly, if not solely, depends on the mind and bias of the believer. But, however received, they show incontestably that, in the prophetic belief, the souls of all men after death assemble together indiscriminately. They pronounce nothing beyond. Nothing beyond had been revealed. Satan had nothing to do with them, which is the only point at present issue.

The prophet Daniel has, indeed, a verse which foreshadows a certain form of future retribution, when he says: 'and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to shame and everlasting contempt.' It is a verse to be well remembered, as announcing a

fixed condition after judgment. But it also puts a bar between death and the day of judgment in which Satan has no power. And more, it assumes a sleep—utter unconsciousness, between death and judgment—adding to its uncertainty ; though, as a question of belief, of no vital moment whatever.

It may, indeed, be observed in passing that even in that foreshadowing of a penalty its force is not in any outward act—fire or otherwise—it is in the scorn of others, and the sense of shame ; but it is eternal. The ground of happiness is to be in the memory of a devout life ; the ground of suffering in the agonizing remembrance of a sinful, worthless existence while on earth. That is the prophet's view. Mental both ; bodily anguish none. And so, once more, in no single instance, or by any figure of speech, can the Hell of the Old Testament be made to be more than Hades, the abode of the soul, conscious or unconscious, until its final sentence.

This is a consideration, or fact, of no slight moment. Daniel prophesied in Babylon, as did Jeremiah in the time of the Captivity ; and it has been seen, on the undeniable record of the Bible itself, that *up* to those seventy years of thralldom Satan himself was next to a nonentity

in the history of the nation. He had, in the religious system, or belief of Man, not the slightest foothold. So far from being dreaded, he was only acknowledged by name at an enormous interval from his expulsion from Eden. And it may be safely asserted that, until the two tribes returned from the Babylonish Captivity—of the ten we know nothing—Satan in the modern sense, as an intervening Power in Man's future destiny, was absolutely unknown. Absolutely !

The captivity of the two tribes broke them into fragments; confused wealthy and poor—into one common ruin; dislocated the most sacred ties; separated those who were near; brought into close contact those who had been apparently for ever apart; and brought tears, anguish, and sorrow to all. But it did more: it altered the national character. The nation up to that time had its bias, its virtues, its sins, like other nations. After the Captivity, its tone, so to speak, became changed, lowered, deteriorated. True, it held to the Mosaic Law; loathed the Samaritan apostasy; and on the whole preserved a reverence for religion and its customs—though for the most part formal and ceremonial.

They had now breathed the superstitious

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and idolatrous spirit of the Babylonian Priesthood, and fell readily into the acknowledgment of the two dominant powers of that Hierarchy, Ormuzd and Ahriman. One, the principle of all good; the other the principle of all evil. They contended in the people's secret belief with the Almighty Himself; and so one was to be feared, the other to be conciliated.

The evils and misfortunes of life began to be ascribed to the prevailing Ahriman; their cessation to the victorious arm of Ormuzd. The two were easily blended and made to harmonize with existing and floating ideas of Satan; they were an introduction to the greater and more fatal influences which were subsequently attributed to him. From that time he became a Power in the religious history of Israel. The belief in a future life dawned upon the nation in a stronger light from its contact with the religious system of Babylon, and was naturally associated with rewards and penalties. Not universally, for the contending sects of Pharisees and Sadducees began from the restoration to their own land, though gradually, and without the distinctive sectarian name of their true founder, Sadoc, as known in later times.

The interval between the return and the Advent of our Lord is great, more than 500 years from the decree of Cyrus ; and the rise in the thorough belief in Satan, and his influence on the infirmities and moral weaknesses of men and their possession, must be left to conjecture ; nor is accuracy in its rise in any way important. It may be held as certain that a Satan with such power over men's souls as to lure them into future perdition was not for a long time held forth in any way as a sanction and inducement to a good life.

Long after the close of the Old Testament Canon it slowly, gradually advanced as the nation became more consolidated, and its rulers more enlightened. As it has been seen, the Deuteronomic blessings and denunciations, in their first sense and application, regarded temporal interests above all others ; and only very remotely, and by a faint and indistinct implication, bore on an after-life, and even then they failed. The most imperious body of laws and statutes which the world ever saw proved wholly incapable of compelling obedience, though coupled with an absolute, present, and known penalty for every single transgression hanging over the head of the offender.

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Hard and onerous as was the Law, with all its minute severities, it might have been given in that early stage of Jewish history—as undoubtedly it was—in purest mercy : not only to show the awfulness of God, but to lead in due time to a full and free recognition of the higher sanction of eternity.

That was apparently in the thought of St. Paul, when he said, ‘The Law was our school-master to bring us to Christ.’ In itself, it was beyond any power of man to obey ; and yet it was bound on the conscience by the most tremendous penalties for each separate violation, with the effect that the transgressor was daily, as it were, in the Presence of God as an object of His mercy and forgiveness. The mildness of Christ’s Law super-added to the Mosaic Code, and in a manner controlling it, seemed, as in the thought of St. Paul, well adapted to lead the Jewish mind to what might familiarly be termed the amended, or completed Law. Christ ‘came not to destroy, but to fulfil the Law ;’ and to engraft His own Theocracy upon it. He came, as we believe, to adjust the Faith, and instruct His own nation, primarily, in the true Will of God ; and through them—before the Great End should come—the Faith of the whole world.

CHAPTER II.

THE SATAN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THE full character of Satan is for the first time developed by our Lord. His existence is not only recognised by Him ; but powers, not even imagined before, are freely and unreservedly ascribed to him. It would seem as if the time, unripe before, had now come to maturity. His malignant, deadly influence is brought out in parable, allusion, miracle, and direct asseveration. It is shown in the persons of the demoniacs, and the dread of the people. In our Lord's hands he becomes a direct Power of evil to the soul. Hell is first threatened as a place of horrible torment, over which he has unlimited control, assisted by legions of evil angels and spirits. His agency, terrible in things temporal, is only a means for the sacrifice of the soul. Heaven is presented on

one side; Hell on the other; and both are eternal.

The development, though, is gradual. His influence, hitherto uncertain and confined, has to be enlarged from earth into eternity, and the minds of the people are step by step prepared for it. A grand Introduction to his pretensions and his powers is given at the very outset of our Lord's ministry in the Temptation in the Wilderness; and it should be carefully observed, that his first mention and appearance is in perfect harmony with his representation in the Old Testament. As there represented, his power is only and solely over temporal things. That has been amply shown, embroiling our first parents with their Creator; suggesting a deep and heinous sin to David, dressed up, no doubt, in the glowing colours of a thanksgiving patriotism; and in all these temptations touching the interests of this life alone. They, too, are the only things—enticements—that he has now to set forth and offer in the Temptation of our Lord. He does not venture to make the most distant allusion to the future. He is still the opponent of God on earth. Nor does he venture, throughout the whole of our Lord's Ministry upon earth, to touch the interests of the soul in the slightest

degree. He never speaks of it. He has the whole Jewish world before him. He has, apparently, unlimited control over his demoniacs. He has, too, our Lord's denunciation of his own fire and flame on sinners to support him, and yet not a word of the future escapes him or his instruments. They, like himself, deal with this life alone.

That is greatly to be remarked. Their sole mission is to torment and torture their wretched victims, reducing them at one time to idiocy or madness ; at another, stirring them up to such frantic violence and ferocity, that they had to be bound with chains ; sending them forth with lepers and outcasts, and separating them from their kind.

They had no other mission ; nor had Satan power to change or intensify it. All the history of the time proves incontestably, that on every occasion he was incapable of going beyond the mere possession—hopelessly checked, barred, and discomfited in the end.

We are, though, at present at the Temptation, and it is a very striking fact, that in this the supreme of all his efforts, when he is staking his power, nay, in truth, his very existence on earth, Satan had only some poor temporal gifts to

offer to our Lord—a Nebuchadnezzar glory—the kingdoms of the earth, and some few years' dominion over them !

The suggestion has been made, that he was at first uncertain of our Lord's presence as the Messiah, and that the two early trials were only calculated to feel his way, and be made certain of his ground. They were only preliminaries to embarrass Him with the Almighty, and with no benefit to himself. It may be so. The third was the great and final allure-ment, when he fully discerned our Lord's real character—the throne of the world. It is immaterial. The animus in either case was precisely the same.

The condition of 'worship' which was attached, may seem preposterous to us who live in later days, as likely to defeat itself; but it would not seem so in that age. 'Worship' only meant 'homage.' Satan in his wildest fancies could scarcely hope for the faintest sign of religious worship. He meant obeisance as his suzerain, just as his brethren 'made obeisance' before Joseph. It is a common Eastern meaning of the word; inclining with respect and reverence, according to the dignity of the person, or the occasion of it. Worship in heathen temples or at heathen altars was

often given by simply bowing before the image, or throwing a few grains of incense on his altar. Nothing more was required. It was an acknowledgment, an obeisance to the idol.

We may reasonably suppose that homage to have been all that Satan at that time required—a recognition of his status as the opponent—the powerful opponent of the Lord. Outside the narrow territory of Judæa idols and false gods were in the ascendant. Every country possessed its favourite shrines and presiding deities, who were upheld with eager emulation as givers or withholders of all earthly prosperity. That was Satan's attitude towards our Lord in the 'Temptation.' He claimed that power.

During the last few centuries his fame had spread amongst Eastern nations. Joined, in idea, with Ormuzd, Ahriman, and Beelzebub, he stood in the mind of those nations in the might and majesty of the Ahriman principle. No marvel that he should assume a sovereignty over the petty land of Israel, and over the descendants of his first victims as well. The depravity of the world at large gave a colour to his belief; and our Lord Himself so far recognised it as to designate him 'the Prince of this world.'

The Temptation is, without doubt, the most striking event, or incident, in the life of our Lord on earth, only approached, not paralleled, by the Transfiguration. Marvellous in itself—equally so in its time and object. If it be allowable to give reasons, the most obvious seem to be these: Born in our nature, pure in birth from all taint of sin, ‘perfect Man of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting,’ He was, as Man, open to temptation; and so, in that sense, liable to or capable of sin. If not, He would cease to have been Man, and have been in all respects superior to Man’s nature. He would have clashed against St. Paul’s powerful doctrine—‘as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.’

He had lived thirty years, sinless in thought and deed. It pains distressingly, so to speak of our Lord; nor is the pain less because spoken with a reverence incapable of words; but it must be said, to throw a light upon the Temptation. Though equal with God, in the language of St. Paul, ‘He took upon Him the form of a servant.’ He had in that trial no angels at His side, no celestial forces at His command. He stood—a Man—unaided and alone, at the outset of His most tremendous mission—not a mission which any man had

imagined or known, but the most tremendous that *Man* in his wildest imagination could ever have conceived.

Might He in His unaided Manhood fail? The Temptation in the Wilderness is at once the answer and the test. By the will of the Almighty Father He was to be tried, lest in the weakness of human nature—though without sin—He might yield. A ready answer might be in doubtful minds—that all was foreknown in heaven. True; but foreknowledge apart has no bearing on the event. Hence the Temptation at the very opening and outset of His Ministry.

It is not to be assumed, in the broadest strain of free-thinking, that the Trial, rather than Temptation, could by any possibility have failed. It is assumption to say that there was a necessity for its being known. It was only known through our Lord's infinite condescension. The forty days' Fast was no new thing. It was an Israelitish Institution, begun by Moses, cemented by Elijah. Thousands and ten thousands had solemnized the forty days' ceremonial Fast, and their communion with God had been consecrated in their own hearts—laid up there in secret. In our Lord's hands it was a part of His Mission and Ministry, and

in the graciousness of His Divine Nature He revealed it. It was the first act of His Passion; victorious, but still a portion of it; important—perhaps the most important—for all the rest would follow in moral sequence from that great triumph.

We approach the Temptation itself. If it be taken as a literal, historical fact—which the words fully justify, which the Church has accepted, and which is commonly believed—it follows that on the fortieth day of this Fast Satan approached our Lord to tempt Him into sin, and so to wreck His Mission and Atonement. Whether he approached in human guise, or in a form which concealed his real nature and character, is uncertain. All that is known is in few words. Under the semblance of believing our Lord to be the Messiah; believing it or not, he gave Him a threefold opportunity of manifesting it and asserting His Supremacy. This being so, two things follow.

On the failure of the first attempt to persuade our Lord to convert stones into bread, He was lifted up bodily by strength of arm high in the air, and borne through it to a lofty, pinnacle of the Temple. He was placed there, partly to show the superhuman might of the

tempter, and partly as on a lofty eminence whence He might cast Himself down headlong to the pavement below, trusting to Divine protection and superintendence to bear Him harmless.

Whether in mockery, or in a secret thought that ministering angels *might* come down to uphold Him, must be left uncertain. The temptation failed. He was adjured in vain; a plausible Scripture was confuted by Scripture; and He was borne back again in the same manner through the air to the wilderness. That was an exercise of force; but he must have made use of another faculty as well: that of conferring invisibility on our Lord, and assuming it himself.

We may then suppose, that after an interval of persuasion and subtle argument, urged in vain, our Lord was borne bodily a second time to 'an exceeding high mountain,' so high, that from it could be seen all kingdoms of the world and their glory; an Oriental hyperbole, expressive of supremacy and magnificence. It would be hypercriticism to say that there was no such mountain in Judæa, seeing that the account does not limit the scene to Judæa; and also that Satan, with the powers accredited to him, might have caused an appearance of

the splendid reality by 'glamour might,' and have invested it with a perfect semblance of truth.

However manifested, it was made to appear as if the kingdoms of the then known world were spread before His eyes, dazzling to the sight, and overwhelming, irresistible to an ambitious mind. And besides, it is only natural to suppose as well, that in all these temptations, of which the headings alone are given, the utmost finesse, persuasion, and craftiness of speech were used; that they were long continued; and that our Lord's weakened nature was tried again and again in various forms by Satanic sophisms, before the Tempter knew himself to be vanquished. He left our Lord at last, borne back into the wilderness; and angels descended from above, or became visible to Him, as His guardians and ministers to support Him in His exhaustion, and to soothe Him in the hour of His triumph.

That is the simple narrative, as it is universally received. It must be owned, be it spoken with all faithful reverence and reserve, that there is something to cause thought in that *plain reception*. Is it open in any wise to Interpretation?

The writer is fully aware of the danger of

wresting, or turning plain, exact narratives into other channels ; and he is strongly persuaded that it never should be done except under paramount inducements. He will not say, in the face of its literal reception by Churchmen, that he is altogether justified in desiring to fix a second meaning to the Temptation ; and he need scarcely add, that in doing so, he gives way to his own view alone, and without the remotest wish or idea of fastening it in any conceivable way on others. It has struck himself forcibly ; it may appear to others unfounded, crazy ; but nevertheless, the double flight through the air, once to a distance from Jerusalem, our Lord bodily in the *arms of Satan* (a horror in idea), and the miraculous invisibility, may give a just reason for thoughtfulness.

Under this impression another view may be presented, which, without the slightest interference with the narrative, may perhaps offer a solution. The writer would again guard himself from assumption of any kind, and only offer material for thought. He would suggest, therefore, that on the completion of the forty days' Fast, our Lord, whether from weakness or Divine interposition, fell into a trance, and that with His eyes open, and with a full possession of intent, thought, mind and will, the

scene and its accessories passed in review before Him, from the approach of Satan to his discomfiture.

That notion is no novelty in Scripture. Balaam had it — ‘falling into a trance, but having his eyes open’—when he denounced in succession the invasions of Balak, and saw the coming triumphs of Israel, and the ‘Star’ in the distant future.

Ezekiel had it *passim*—very markedly in the eleventh chapter, where it is said: ‘The Spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the Lord’s house, which looketh eastward.’ A powerful prophecy followed.

In Daniel x., he stood by the river Hiddekel and saw the vision of an angel whose hands, in his own words, ‘touched me, and set me on my knees, and upon the palms of mine hands.’ A long prophetic vision followed, given as spoken face to face by the angel.

St. Paul tells us that at a certain period of his life he was ‘caught up to the third heaven,’ and heard unspeakable words; but whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell, so real and life-like was the vision.

The Book of Revelation is founded, from first to last, on visions and celestial decrees, so that there is nothing forcibly antagonistic to the

idea suggested. Our Lord's mind, and indeed His whole Being, had been intensely strung—if such an expression may be used—during the forty days of fasting, on the great and awful nature of His Mission. It is not to be supposed that it could have left His thought for a moment. It must have been impressed, engrained indissolubly in its every movement. Not only that, but His mind must have been exercised and stored as well with all He had to accomplish, as with all He had to oppose. That sad conflict, too, might have begun to arise within, which was afterwards so keenly felt but toned down in the resolving thought: ‘for this cause came I unto this hour’; and, as on another occasion, by the agonizing prayer, ‘Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from Me!’

It is ill to make conjectures on such thoughts and meditations, save in the lightest and fleetest manner. The lengthened Fast, in the weakness of the body, might have rendered the spiritual being more susceptible of impressions. Let it be suggested, in a word, that a preternatural and ecstatic state might have supervened which led to the Vision and supplied its incidents. Its effect on the mind, will, and action of our Lord would have been the same ;

its influence on the hearts of believers the same, without the jarring incidents of the Temple and the Mountain. Let it be received as a suggestion, but as a suggestion alone.

There is, though, this further consideration of some slight weight—that as trance or vision had been a frequent mode of communicating knowledge in Bible history, so it carried with it all the authority of direct command. The people recognised and understood it; and it seems therefore probable that if this Temptation had been communicated to them under that form, they would have received it as readily as under the simpler form in which it had been given to them. Otherwise said, their belief lay in either form.

Still it may be urged, that the narrative is too minute and precise to admit of its being received in any other light than recorded fact. That is a Western idea applied to Oriental usage. Its narrative form may be paralleled with many passages in the Prophets, which without any manner of doubt were never written, and were never intended to be so received. It is well to fortify assertion by examples of this mode of Divine communication.

The Prophet Jeremiah in his thirteenth chapter states, that in a time of great popular wickedness, he took a linen girdle, by the command of the Lord, and bound it round his loins with an express injunction to 'put it not in water.' He bound and wore it as enjoined. Whether or not it was seen by the people is not stated. It is left open. After a time he received a second command to take a long journey by himself to the Euphrates, and hide it 'in a hole of the rock.' He goes on to state, that he took the journey; hid it in the rock, and returned to Jerusalem. Nothing could be more graphic and precise, than the wearing of the girdle and the journey to the Euphrates.

After 'many days' he was commanded to take a second journey to the Euphrates, and bring it back. He went and recovered the girdle, but it was found to be 'marred' and worthless.

On his return he assembled the people; held it up before their eyes in its worn and ragged state; explained to them the meaning of the two long journeys; likened them to it, and denounced their sin, wickedness, and the anger of the Lord in terms to make them shudder, closing the dire accusation with the terrible words, 'thus saith the Lord; after this manner

will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem.'

The way in which this is told is purely narrative. There is not the very slightest intimation by a single word that it is anything else, and yet it is historically clear, that he never left the confines of Judea in that part of his life under the kings. And quite certain, that he never at any time journeyed to the Euphrates to hide a girdle in a rock, and after a long season journeyed thither again to bring it back falling to pieces and spoiled.

But he might have done it in a vision—a trance like Balaam, just quoted, who 'saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open'—and have related it to the people just as it was presented to him. He might too, and no doubt did, exhibit a girdle before the eyes of the assembled multitudes 'marred' and useless, and have commented largely, and with great severity, on it. It was not as if he spoke to an ignorant people, or a people to whom this kind of instruction was unknown. Their history was full of it. They knew that he had always been among them, clad in his dark prophet's robes; that he had never left them. And as he related his journeys to the great assembly of the people in one of the

Courts of the Temple, or elsewhere, not a man present but would have understood, and have taken it home as the Will and the decree of God.

In Jeremiah xxv., a command is given to the prophet to take the Lord's 'wine-cup of fury' and cause Jerusalem and Judæa, and certain specified nations to whom he should be sent to drink it. The prophet proceeds: 'Then I took the cup at the Lord's hand, and made all the nations to drink unto whom the Lord sent me.' More than twenty nations are enumerated to whom he went.

This heavy judgment, though in narrative form, was evidently communicated and acted upon in vision. Time ceases in dreams. As a fact and event in the life of the prophet it is simply impossible. The prophet never made his appearance at one of those Courts to denounce the judgment of God—'the wine-cup'—against them.

It is not difficult to bring before the mind a great gathering of the inhabitants of Jerusalem at this time, for it is one of much doubt and perplexity. Fears are within the city and without, and a strong feeling is abroad that the hand of God, heavy and hard, is suspended over them ready to fall. There is a conscious-

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ness of great sin and provocation, idol-worship, thinly, if at all disguised, and rebellion at heart. There is, however, a recognised and true prophet among them, a man of severe and ascetic life, venerated by the people, hated and dreaded by the king, but strong in the favour of Heaven. There is a rumour that he has seen a vision, and has a message to them from the Almighty. They assemble, scarcely hopeful, mostly trembling. The whole city is moved, eager to hear, and ready for the moment to obey.

We can readily see the prophet standing forth with his imaginary wine-cup of God's fury lifted up on high, and the burning words which follow launched against the sins and ingratitude of Jerusalem; and when these are past, the denunciations of wrath hurled as well against the chosen seed's oppressors; and as nation after nation is held up by name and devoted to 'a desolation, an astonishment and a hissing' for their sins against God, and their tyranny towards themselves, we may hear the throbbing, agitated murmurs of the people, and know that the influence of the prophet's words on their minds would be no less forcible and true than if he had returned in reality from his embassy. It would not have increased it.

In Ezekiel iv., the prophet is commanded to

take a tile, and to portray on it the city of Jerusalem. He is then to make preparations for a mimic siege against it as a sign and type of coming woes. Having done so, he is commanded to lie on his left side 390 days, in token of bearing the iniquity of the house of Israel. He is then to lie 40 days on his right side, as a similar token to the lesser house of Judah. Each day is appointed for a year. Whilst executing these commands he is to prophesy and denounce the Lord's displeasure against the city; and then it is said: 'And behold, I will lay my hands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another till thou hast ended the days of thy siege.' His food during those typical days is also selected, and scantily portioned out with much minuteness to show the distress, horrors, and famine which should hereafter exist during the real siege.

All this, though given to the prophet under the form of direct command, was impressed on the minds of the people under the form of a Vision. It was never intended to be carried out; scarcely could be. But the effect on the threatened inhabitants of Jerusalem would be the same; and as the prophet laid his Vision before them, with the mimic siege, with his

forced attitude, and the preparation of the famine food—every mouthful of which would have been a horrible abomination—it would go to their minds with the force, whatever it might be, that the same things would have been done if transacted before their eyes. They did not want the reality; their imagination supplied it.

It is, of course, admitted that there may be distinctions which separate the Temptation from these narratives. It is not a subject which can lightly be entertained. It is too sacred and too obscure; but in view of the similar decisiveness of the language, it may be allowed to place them all under a similar mode of interpretation, suggestively.

There is, though, another thought which may, perhaps, carry with it some small amount of influence in the view expressed. Our Lord was alone during the long Fast. No one approached; no one dared or desired to mar by his presence the profound seclusion of the sacred rite; and so, all that is known of it and of its conclusion proceeds from our Lord Himself. We may suppose Him to have imparted it to His disciples in one of His daily conferences with them. So far may be considered

certain. Whether He made it known in the form in which it has come down to us, or whether as a Vision under the narrative form of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, is by no means so certain. It might have been. The disciples, as devout Jews, chosen by our Lord for that quality—with one hypocritical assumption of it—would have been well versed in that mode of teaching by their prophets, and have accepted it readily. We read it as written. We interpret it, as we do all Scriptures, in the spirit of the Beræans, whose greatest praise in the mind of St. Paul was that ‘they searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so.’ The account is given by three of the four Evangelists. That by St. Matthew is terse, clear and circumstantial. The version by St. Mark, which is slightly different from St. Matthew, generalizes; merely indicating that He was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan, and was with the wild beasts, and that angels ministered unto Him.

St. Luke, not being of the twelve, drew his narrative from the version current at the time he wrote—a version identical in fact with that of St. Matthew, though different in the order. There are other slight deviations as well from

the earlier Evangelists, which tend to show an independent, or partially independent, source.

St. Matthew wrote many years after our Lord's death, and so we have no sure means of knowing under what form it was received and understood at the time. It is sufficient at the present day, while reading it literally, to show an alternative which, without imposing the very shadow of a restraint, presents it under a form of great simplicity in itself, and not inconsistent with other Scripture.

The Vision theory seems in a manner justified as well, in that it heralds the personal and direct reappearance of Satan after an interval of 4,000 years, Bible chronology; while he has made no second *appearance*, nor will, until the *near approach* of the end of the world, as declared in 'Revelation.' That may be uncounted ages hence, till the whole world shall again be of one religious 'language and of one speech.'

At all events, the first Satanic inroad has been made, and failed, whether in fact or Divine Vision. The result on our Lord's mind would be the same, perfect and conscious victory. He is free in either case, to use St. Luke's words, 'for a season.' The demoniac agency is confined to secondary things, at-

tempted or accomplished chiefly by Spirits, or angel-ministers—a skirmishing warfare, Satan himself invisible. His great field of assault was in the persons of the possessed. He threw them out of the pale of humanity ; reduced them to helplessness and the most abject poverty, involving the sufferers and their families in one common ruin.

It is, perhaps, worth remark that in this mode of warfare he went back to the destructive power attributed to him in the Book of Job. He could torment and inflict misery on the person of Job and his sons and daughters, and burn and destroy their goods and possessions ; and so in our Lord's time he could harry and vex the demoniacs. But he had no sort or shade of influence on the future. Like leprosy, or any other frightful ailment, the possession had no condemning control over the soul ; it distracted and distressed. It painfully affected the wretched beings by making them outcasts, and destroying any happiness they might have had in life. It had no effect on their hereafter ; it could not have. In their very possession by a foreign Power they lost their responsibility as much as if they had been lunatics.

Our Lord, as we read, healed them by

multitudes, and sent them back to their families and relatives ; but He never breathed a word in any conceivable shape, that would convict them of personal sin, or of future danger on account of their possession. He did not denounce : He compassionated. Whether or not He took occasion from these demoniacs to teach and impress on the people the deeper mysteries of Satanic presence in the future is not stated. Probably He did ; and certainly the sight of their sufferings and His ascription of them to Satan might have pre-disposed the minds of the people to listen to His terrific denouncements of sin with less reserve. In some cases their nearest relations were the victims. The father grieved over the malady of his son ; the sister over the sufferings of her brother. It was a widely-spread evil. Apparently, not a single town or village in the country was free from examples of it, in every stage of wretchedness and misery. Wherever our Lord went, He found scope for His healing ministry. As for the sufferers themselves, they firmly believed in their possession by the great enemy ; and when dispossessed must have listened with fear and trembling when He laid open to their minds his constant presence, and showed in fact, as the Apostle

afterwards declared in words, that he was as a roaring lion, ever roaming abroad, and seeking whom he might devour.

It is a thought, not to say conviction, very prevalent in recent times, that the Satanic agency on these demoniacs was little more than a figure of speech, and that the real malady of the sufferers is to be interpreted by epilepsy, or other stringent and malignant corresponding disease. It is a question that need not be dwelt upon, for the very plain reason that it cannot be set at rest except by the personal belief of the upholders of either view. The language of the Synoptists is clear; and, however widely or deeply discussed, as long as their writings are received canonically in the Church, so long will there be stanch believers in the reality of demoniac possession.

The language of St. John, too, is equally clear, both in regard to our Lord's recognition and to the belief of the people: 'Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?' is a remonstrance on an apparent wavering of the disciples, and intimates a possession. At the last Supper, when our Lord had passed the sop to Judas, it is said that 'after the sop Satan entered into him.'

The belief of the people was more than once

testified by their accusations, that our Lord acted and prevailed over the demoniacs by Satanic influence; once, that He was 'a Samaritan, and had a devil'; and on another occasion by the scornful reproach, 'He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye Him?' But we may leave the demoniacs, for it must be clear that in them the power of Satan was limited to a lifetime, and without the least approach to a seizure of the soul. That was recognised by our Lord in their persons.

But we come next to a direct and absolute accusation of Satan by our Lord on a higher ground, which can by no means be weakened or explained away. It is direct upon the person, and upon the soul.

St. Peter, grand as he was in nature, and grand in action during our Lord's progresses, gaining for himself the proud distinction of the play upon his name—the Rock; grand in rushing by the timid St. John into the tomb on the morning of the Resurrection; grand in these and other things, he yet had his moments of weakness, a weakness on one occasion far too marked ever to be forgotten. Our Lord, as we know, foresaw and foretold it. In vain. He fell, and left the high priest's palace after his threefold denial, sad, sorrowful, and bitterly

repentant. But conjoined with this prophecy of his fall he had another solemn personal warning, that should have remained fixed in his mind and memory. And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.' We have here an undoubted reference to St. Peter's soul, and his fate hereafter. It is not parable; it is plain and straightforward asseveration. Satan has desired *to have you*; but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not.

These two examples are of this great value, that they apply in direct terms to living men, and are not set forth in parable or ideal illustration. They must have profoundly impressed the disciples, and brought back vividly to their mind the Temptation and early assault on our Lord. That impression was one great aim and object of our Lord as shown in all His intercourse with them, and it is strongly evidenced that through the whole three years of His Ministry He fully and freely recognised the existence, the influence, and to a certain extent the dominion of Satan over the life, and thence, through sin, over the soul hereafter. That is the outline of what has been written. It has to be filled up.

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The Incarnation is complex and many-sided, and not within the line of the present inquiry, which only touches one point of it in chief—the destiny of the soul hereafter. That destiny, though, is paramount, and all that our Lord taught was contained in, and rose up to it. Direct knowledge, or at any rate direct doctrine, was the great want and craving of the age, disastrous in its uncertainty, and He supplied it. To the world at large it was an enigma, insoluble to the wisest, an argued guess, shrined by Priests in mysteries, a truth drawn down by the slenderest threads of ancient tradition, and fabled in its application.

To the Jewish world it was an inheritance, loosely held by some, hypocritically clung to by others, which, between the two, gave rise to the infidel doctrine of the Sadducees. The Samaritan schism sprang rather from political than religious motives; but the result was equally disastrous, and so thoroughly corrupt was the religious state of the nation at large that the very truth was tortured and obscured by glosses, exceptions, and reservations, until very little more was left than its germ.

The vindication of the Law, whether as the eternal Law of God in its spirit, or as the

recognised monotheism from the time of Abraham down to His own was the great opening labour of Christ. It was the groundwork of His teaching, and the strength of His controversies with His enemies. It was the foundation on which He built the sacred structure of God in Christ in lieu of God alone. If He was emphatic and clear in one assertion of His Mission more than another, it was in appeal to the Scriptures of the Old Testament. That was the spirit in which He said : ' Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets ; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.' He referred continually to the Old Testament as foreshadowing, and in point of fact foretelling the Incarnation, sometimes by allusion, sometimes by quotation, and most strenuously in His parting conference with His disciples, when He said : ' That all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me.'

But that recognition, whenever spoken, was only as it were a handmaid to the impressive truth, often alluded to, but never in clearer terms than when He said on another occasion : ' I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.'

They are parts of the same thought and the same design.

Modern criticism has led to the conclusion that a considerable body of laws was added to, and interwoven with, the Mosaic Laws in the Pentateuch as the people increased and became more firmly established in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. It is open to argument and minute criticism, and much of both have been of late years expended on it. It is more a matter for experts than for the great body of believers. It need not distress them, neither need it interfere with the plain reception of the Law as it stands. It was devoutly observed—devoutly as seeming went—by the whole nation of the Jews before, and in our Saviour's time, and it is received devoutly by the Jews at the present moment, scattered as they are over every quarter of the world. It gives a wide field to the learned, but it will stand intact as long as the religion which is founded on it shall stand. If they fall, they will fall together. Many verities within it, clear and consistent as we now view them, often escaped men's notice in those early times. As we have seen, the future, in their vague belief, at its very best was more a hope than a faith, without the most distant idea in what

its happiness consisted. The greater Prophets had glorious visions of Heaven spread forth in bright mystic symbol and gorgeous imagery, but they showed the grandeur and awfulness of the Almighty rather than the future happiness of the blest. In later times they believed in a Hell, or as a locality for the soul after death, but with an utter want of knowledge of the future pains and penalties of sin. They had no fear or dread of the hereafter. Then Satan, even after the Captivity, was solely of the earth ; they had no interest in him beyond the grave. Their sins were still to be expiated in life ; they followed them not into the future. The offence was met by the penalty, and pardoned.

With such imperfect knowledge of the Law illustrated by the Prophets, by which the believing portion of the people professed to be guided, and such aberrations from its spirit, it is clear that our Lord had to teach them almost *ab initio*.

No strictly chronological order was observed by the Evangelists ; but we may reasonably conjecture that our Lord's solemn and vital teaching began with the Moral Law as epitomized in the Sermon on the Mount, epitomized

with little more than headings. A shorter or longer discourse and exposition would doubtless have followed each of the Beatitudes, and the succeeding grave points of warning and doctrine, which lay not in the Inspiration of St. Matthew to commemorate. Our Lord had chosen His disciples, and had made progress through Galilee teaching in their synagogues and healing their sick. His fame had begun to be spread abroad; people gathered round Him, followed Him, and in such crowds that He thought it well before sending them back to their homes to instruct them in the solid truths of their Law in a broader and more personal application than they had been taught by their Scribes and Rulers. Not the Moral Law alone. He interspersed with it some of the more touching truths of religion.

It is in this Sermon that we come across the first solid intimation of Heaven as a reward; a reward on persecution 'for righteousness' sake'; a reward, too, on special ground to 'the poor in spirit.' Conjoined with it, in opposition, we light on passages in which Hell is first and suddenly mentioned under its most terrific form of *fire*, mentioned without premonition or pre-knowledge. Not as seen in the Old Testament—the Hell where souls of

the dead meet and converse, as already notified in the Prophets, without pain, and intimately interested in the current events of the world they have lately left, but as the Hell of modern belief. It may be said that there was a secret knowledge or recognition of it in its heavier form. That notion is plausible. It does not appear in Canonical Scripture, not a gleam of it.

In the course of His instruction, our Lord touched on the legal judgment which would follow murder, and associated it in idea with violent and causeless fits of anger. He thence denounced the danger of scorn of our fellow men, and concluded with the unexpected and terrible threat that 'whosoever shall say "Thou fool" shall be in danger of hell fire.'

Following closely upon this, He interprets another form of sin, and denounces it twice under the same frightful penalty. 'If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out;' 'if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off.' Rather loss and present suffering, than that 'thy whole body should be cast into hell.'

On another occasion, chapter xviii., He uses the same illustration with the addition of 'thy foot,' and denounces the offender with 'hell fire' and 'everlasting fire.'

We have seen that wild ideas of that lurid region, with 'Beelzebub' as its 'prince of devils' and a numerous Court of spirits and demons, were brought with other deities from Babylon after the Captivity, and were diffused more or less broadly among the people. He and his spirits were held much after the manner of the superstitions, fancies, and groundless terrors which are to be found in all savage nations and peoples. A dominion was assigned him with evil angels as his subjects; and these, as in the Parable of the 'seven spirits,' were supposed to enter into men and dominate them. In the popular mind he seems to have been confused at times with Satan, or allied with him. But it can never be too often, or too forcibly expressed that they had no sort of fear, or anticipation of being amongst his subjects or victims hereafter. Neither should it ever be forgotten that the devils themselves, by their own confession, only looked to a passing power over the souls of men temporarily subjected unto them. Death would release the possessed. The devils would return to their old state in their fiery kingdom; or rather, as they on one occasion pathetically complained to our Lord, to a state of 'torment.'

Under notions of Heaven so vague and indeterminable, and with the conviction of the legal expiation of all sins and offences in life, we may be morally sure that 'hell' and 'hell-fire,' as expiations in addition, had not troubled men's thoughts. The probability is that such a contingency had not entered them. It may, therefore, be taken for granted that, among the elucidations of the Sermon on the Mount, the passages where Hell is mentioned would find a predominant place, and that our Lord would enlarge upon them. As they have reached us, they are little more than bare statements of a fact.

In all likelihood, too, the whole Law, in its most important bearings, was fully laid open and made clear; so that they might be able to receive the higher and spiritual truths founded on it, without which it would remain, as it had so long remained, almost a dead letter. We, too, may be quite assured that the judgment of condemnation would have been pointedly and powerfully set forth, to be followed through the continued and varied stream of parable, example, allusion, by which it was subsequently illustrated. Our Lord would thus gain their minds and captivate their imagination. Indeed, it is expressly said of His general minis-

trations that, 'without a parable'—or incentive to keep alive their interest—'spake He not unto them.' By means of these incentives He led them on to higher ideas of human life in its regard to the 'kingdom of heaven,' as in the 'treasure hid in a field'; as in the 'three measures of meal'; as in the 'pearl of great price'; and thence to their future responsibilities, as in the 'talents,' until He reached the full doctrine of rewards and punishments.

Among the Parables relating to the future, that of Dives and Lazarus must always be placed in the front, not in time of relation, but as setting forth a principle of Divine judgment which was not only beyond the intelligence of the age, but which had never entered into its thoughts or calculation; that an indolent, luxurious, self-indulgent life was a sinful life; that it was hateful to God, and disastrous to the soul.

Dives had incurred no tangible guilt by the Law, and none was imputed to him. He had led an ignoble life, not judicially criminal; indolent and luxurious, but sanctioned, in some sort, by usage and the manners of the time. He was rich, and he enjoyed his riches after his fashion. He was clothed in soft purple

flowing robes, and fared sumptuously every day, which in common opinion was in accordance with his wealth and station. He was not blamed, he was envied. Thousands in Jerusalem would have been eager to have run many risks for the power of living like him. That living was the head, front, and substance of his offence, and his accusation as well. Nothing else. His ordinary life in other respects was neutral. If he was not a good man in active deeds of goodness, he was not a bad man in deeds of guilt. The ascetic world might have sternly and heavily censured him; it would not have doomed him. In other respects, apart from his daily life he was probably open to man's deepest reproach. By inference he was a non-worshipper and irreligious—as by implication were his five brethren. His intercession for them discloses his own state of sin, as well as theirs. But that was not the inducement of the Parable; it does not enter into it, it is wholly foreign to it.

Every one knows that a life of sin leads to a state of condemnation. So grave and weighty a Parable was not needed to teach a truth so simple. The pith and life of it lies strictly in the absence of marked and overt sin.

In regard to Lazarus, it is not assumed that

the rich man was harsh, or merciless towards him. He merely ignored him. He suffered him to be brought and laid at his gate every day, as we might say, good-naturedly; and permitted his servants to give him scraps and refuse from the abundance of his table. That seems the natural force of 'desiring to be fed with the crumbs.' He received them as his daily dole, in short, his whole living. If not, he would scarcely have been brought daily, and laid at the gate.

We gain this kindness of heart from his anxiety after death for the fate of his careless, luxurious brothers, with no possible benefit to himself. Millions on millions of men, with flame encircling them for ever, would think of their own sufferings alone. His heart was kind. The Parable is strengthened by it.

After a time, perhaps after many years of this life, the two men die. One descends at once into a hell of fire, the other is soothed by the spirit of the Father of the Faithful for his past sufferings in a state of rest, peace, freedom from ills, and calm, quiet happiness. We do not look to Parables for historic action; but their very essence is moral or suggested truth—a veiled verisimilitude. In this case the imagery or setting of the action is striking; the truth suggested

appalling. The thought rises involuntarily, but with irresistible force, can this be flame—material fire—fire, such as we know upon earth? The risen body is spiritual, inconsumable. With St. Paul, 'it is raised in incorruption,' 'incorruptible,' spiritual, though not, as we may remember, altogether shadowy.

Our Lord said, indeed, 'a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have.' But then He had not ascended. He had risen in the body from the grave, and with that body He appeared. But we must not forget, that a spiritual body though in imagination of infinite tenuity still has atomic substance. It has, too, all the vital force, and with it all the exquisite sense of pain and suffering, which it had in life. It is the human body, if such a term be allowed, sublimated, but still a human body. The mind of Dives remained the same; he had a sense of present suffering and past happiness; a sense of his own hopeless state; a sense of his brothers' whom he had left behind. If we may carry on our ideas into eternity the same sense of what was, and what is, will remain the same. It may be said, that it will be absorbed in present suffering. It might in narrow, selfish natures. In those of nobler caste, the sense of the present would bring all the past into

constant memory with remorse superadded,—eternal.

To return more immediately to his torment. A hand held in flame would give torture, only endurable, in any case, in the supporting sense of a noble cause, and that only for a time. Martyrs have suffered flame in the cause of God fearlessly, cheerfully, to outward seeming. The great and good old Latimer ‘bathed his hands in flame’; but the faggots burned out, and life was wrapped up in ashes. The rich man’s agony, as expressed by himself, would be in his whole body; and that unceasingly, hopelessly, year after year, age after age, million after million for ever, and for ever!

Is it admissible to feel, that the flame may be as shadowy and unreal as the triclinium on which Abraham and Lazarus reclined? As shadowy as the narrow gulf which separated the blessed from the doomed, leaving them in each other’s sight; shadowy as the happiness of a human shade entrusted to another human shade?

Magnificent as the Parable is from its opening to its close, it would lose something from an incongruity in its parts. If the fire be true, the presence of Abraham is true, or the contrary. If the carrying by angels into Abraham’s bosom

was suggestive, the flame might be suggestive also.

Taken as a strong—almost the strongest conceivable contrast, its component parts are of a lesser consequence, provided they harmonize together. It gives its own lesson. But taken literally, which it is for the most part, as a *pictorial* imagination of what in substance will hereafter take place, the fire remains, the accompaniments vanish. Is interpretation admissible?

Taken literally too in another point of view, it seems to interfuse the phases of human guilt. The most atrocious criminal that ever lived could receive no more terrible or severe sentence passed on him than an eternity of flame. There is no other hell—as *hell*—in the whole of the New Testament except the hell of *fire*; and there are no gradations in it. All other condemnation is comprised in exclusion from the Presence of God. The flame torture of Judas is the flame torture of the sinner placed on the left hand at the Last Day, whose sins may have just, and only just, condemned him to the everlasting punishment.

Are we to look on human life, and conclude that the same horrible eternity of fire awaits the man guiltless of offences recognisable and

punishable by law, and criminal only in the misuse of wealth or opportunities, and the vilest murderer, tyrant, or blasphemer? For again let it be said, that all besides a luxurious life is unwritten inference, and wholly unsupported by Scripture. There is the Parable, and it speaks plainly, clearly, and decisively; and the flame of Dives must be taken as real, unless modified, if it should so be, by later examples. Modified or not, the great lesson of the Parable remains: that a wasted, unprofitable life is a sinful life; and that whatever the mode of condemnation, it is eternal.

Hell, as a special locality of torment, is first set forth in all the minuteness of its horrors in the Book of Revelation. It is exhibited in Visions and various forms of allegorical and other imagery; but the dread reality is always beneath, flame, fire, brimstone, lake and pit of fire with ascending clouds of smoke, as from a furnace. Much of the later portion of the Book is taken up with these horrors; and with a sternness and severity of language, at once pitiless and triumphant. Its opening, though, is worthy of great and special notice from the intervention of our Lord in connection with His menaces of Hell while on earth.

A vision is vouchsafed to St. John in the Isle of Patmos, whither he was banished, in which Christ appears to him as the 'Son of Man' in symbolic form. He is awestruck. But words of consolation follow, and a great truth is declared: 'I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hell and Death.'

It thus marks Him as 'the Son of Man,' the future Judge of the 'Nations,' in St. Matthew xxv.; and brings His knowledge of Hell in life into unison with His power over it after death. The one follows and glides into the other.

Hitherto the mention of Hell has been vague and indeterminate, without description, locality, or assignment. Our Lord has spoken of it sometimes simply as 'hell'; at others, under similitudes, as 'everlasting fire,' and so forth; but it is to be marked, that He entered on no description whatever. He used the words, and left the application. It was assumed to be the abode of 'the Devil and his angels,' whence they were able to come forth to do their work on this earth at their pleasure. They came forth singly, or in considerable numbers, wandering up and down; spiritual, invisible; and capable of so blending with persons, who, for some unknown cause, were

liable to such possession, that their thoughts, acts, indeed their whole life was subject in some degree to their influence and direction.

Where such a fiery region existed, and whence and how created, was undetermined. Jewish opinion—and heathen as well—mostly inclined to the centre of the earth; which, though a very natural idea from their defective knowledge of the Universe, and their impression that the earth was God's greatest work, was a singularly delusive one. Earth can have nothing to do with it. Wherever placed, it must have a region, or world of its own. It is, therefore, highly essential to know all that is disclosed of it in the New Testament.

The Parables of our Lord struck a familiar chord, and were recognised and accepted the more readily from previous thoughts floating and ebbing through men's minds; and they are to us now the true sanction to belief and faith in the existence of Hell. It is still remarkable that, with such continuous threats and allusions, He should have given no sort of intimation of what Hell is, or where it is, seeing that it may be so deadly to the soul. As we have seen, His first mention of it was an extremely abrupt one in the Sermon on the Mount; and whenever spoken of afterwards, it was always as a thing

well recognised. The only objection or remonstrance ever raised was no denial, but in reality an acknowledgment. It was the well-known ascription to Beelzebub in the casting out of devils. It was not repeated.

Fortunately, as has been said, we have the Book of 'Revelation,' written, as supposed, about the year 96, which supplies us with supernatural events and descriptions of Hell from St. John's own time to the end of all earthly things. It is passed by in the previous writings of St. Paul. SS. Peter and Jude allude to it; St. James in a single sentence. 'Devil' and 'devils' are spoken of, but with no description of their habitation.

In approaching that Book it must be borne in mind, that with the exception of the opening chapters on the Seven Churches of Asia Minor, which are plainly historical, no portion is literal; it is mystic throughout. True, its mysticism is more or less profound, and may be separated by the careful reader into soluble,*

* The writer has in his mind a celebrated verse in chapter xiv., which has been supposed to herald the Reformation. Verse 6: 'And I saw another angel fly in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.'

and, as yet, insoluble events and truths ; but at his own risk.

As a Sacred Book its fate has been most unfortunate, for it has been wrenched and strained to suit contending views and theories, and though often interpreted has had for the most part very doubtful and unreliable interpretation. The general bias of writers has been virulently polemic against a leading branch of the Christian Church—bigoted in idea, and forced—not to say at once false in adaptation. It is not within the compass of the present inquiry to treat of these attacks. They are, though, singularly convertible. If read as against the Roman Catholic Church, they may be made to appear plausible. If read as against tyrannical and anti-Christian Powers, the plausibility will still remain.

But whether in one direction, or another direction, no single work on that Book has hitherto been received as final, or approaching finality.

It is in fact a series of prophetic Visions, not intended to be forecast ; and only to be known by their accomplishment. As generally held they are in a slow and gradual course of fulfilment until the end of the world.

But as the most abstruse symbols, when

solved, must be in accord with known external things, so the mystical descriptions of Hell and its fires, dreadful as they are, must have something cognate in common meaning to known suffering. Thus far are they open to interpretation, and the reader is not only justified in his endeavours to interpret, but it is laid on him, in his quality of believer, as a moral obligation.

The first prophetic Vision of Hell is in chapter ix., and takes the semblance of a 'bottomless pit.' Seven angels, having in their hands seven trumpets, stand before the throne of the Almighty in Heaven; and as each angel sounds, heavy woes fall upon the earth and its inhabitants. As the fifth angel sounds, an angel in the likeness, or brightness, of a Star falls from Heaven to the earth, and 'to him is given the key of the bottomless pit.'

Our Lord, to whom has been entrusted, or who has assumed, as has been seen, the keys of Hell and Death, has assigned them for the time to the angel. He descends, and the bottomless pit is opened. This opening shows one of two things. Satan has been shut in, and is then loosed; or if he has been free his angels and instruments of evil have been sealed down.

Nothing has been said of either. The angels sound their trumpets, and then we hear for the first time that Satan, or his angels, have been incarcerated, we know not when, we know not how. It is wholly unprefaced.

The rapid descent of the angel to the earth suggests the notion, that the pit was within the earth, and its opening on its surface. It is immaterial, as it is symbolic of great events, not present realities. As he opened it a smoke arose, 'as the smoke of a great furnace,' and with it ascended from the fire beneath a terribly destructive Power under the form of 'locusts,' which became metamorphosed into a formidable army. 'And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared for battle. . . . And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron.' And they were under a king, 'which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon'—the Destroyer.

His mission, though Satanic in its aim and cruelty, was to carry frightful havoc to the people who 'have not the seal of God on their foreheads'—a persecution in some sort *religious*, hardly solved with Satan at its head, as its instrument and leader.

The locusts are figurative and symbolical—must not the fiery furnace of the bottomless pit follow in very consistency? If one is unreal the other is unreal. If the furnace is aglow with consuming fire, such as we know and use on earth, and ‘the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit’ from such fire, and the locusts are figurative, shadowy, and symbolical, there is confusion, which is untenable. They are given to us as the outward signs of hidden truth; they should be in agreement. Let them agree: well. The fire is real, the locusts changed by supernatural enchantment into horses with riders prepared for battle are real, and all is consistent. Let both fire and locusts and their transformation be symbolic: well also. In either case there would be consistency, but divided into real and unreal, they are utterly untenable.

A great stress should be laid on the first mention of the bottomless pit, not only because it is more than once alluded to, and in the end closes up the career of Satan and Hell in Revelation, but because, figuratively or not, it represents the true Hell of that Book.

A striking fact must here be mentioned, though it is not in the order of Revelation

developments of Hell. After the sounding of the seventh trumpet by the angel, with an interlude of the 'woman clothed with the Sun,' which need not delay us, Satan, 'the Devil,' is represented as being in Heaven! for it is stated, chapter xiii., that there was 'war in Heaven,' and 'Michael and his angels fought against the Dragon.' Michael and his angels were God's army, and they were ranged in battle to vindicate and uphold the throne and power in Heaven of the Almighty.

A furious and deadly fight ensues. In the end Michael prevails—that is, God prevails, and 'the great Dragon was cast out, that old Serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world. He was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.'

That casting forth into the earth would lead to the supposition that he and his angels were free to act upon the earth, and the supposition would be well founded; for on his expulsion a voice in Heaven exclaims: 'Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea; for the Devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.'

Parenthetically, it seems strange to our

modern ideas that Satan, the Prince and embodiment of all wickedness, sin and evil, should have an entrance—even in allegorical mysticism—apparently at will, into Heaven and the Presence of God. It seems, though, not to have been strange to them of old time, for they not only allow his entrance, but endow him with the power of a belligerent, at will warring with the Almighty Himself. Heaven, in their ideas, appears to have been a region in space, vast, but circumscribed, with a central Palace, throne, and angelic Courtiers—a Babylonish court *in excelsis*.

Satan, in the received Poem of Job, drew near as a Courtier. In Revelation, and, *seemingly*, in the Epistles of SS. Peter and Jude, he ascended as an armed enemy!

Of course, that war above alluded to, whatever it means, is figurative; and regarded as a conflict between belligerent angels in Heaven in the Presence of God is very far from a successful interpretation. Good and bad angels fighting in Heaven, before God, for mastery, in any—the remotest—sense of action, except in heroic verse, is utterly inadmissible. Angels, allegorically, contending religiously for the souls of men is intelligible. It is the contention of good and evil Principles. But angels

contending for mastery over each other, and for mastery in Heaven, must be left to individual solution alone.

The same crude idea, however, it must be confessed, is found in the writings of two of the Apostles—disciples of our Lord—with the same difficulty of interpretation. St. Jude relates that ‘the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the Judgment of the Great Day.’ Angels chained and kept in darkness until the Great Day of Judgment, except under exceedingly strong metaphor, mean something material and tangible. But St. Jude’s revolt seems to allude to a contention antecedent to Man, and is generally so received; not uncommonly as a rebellion headed by Satan against God; but at any rate to an angelic rebellion of force—a thought which cannot by any possibility stand; and yet force, in some sense, is said to be used against the vanquished, for the evil angels were ‘cast out.’

St. Peter apparently alludes to the same warfare when he says: ‘God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell, and delivered them unto chains of darkness, to be reserved unto Judgment.’ That

sentence is beyond contending Principles. It means angelic form and force however spiritualized—attenuated substance, but substance still.

We are led to suppose that the angels which left their first estate were angels who sacrificed their loyalty, rebelled, and were bound in chains unto the Last Day. This conflict was long antecedent to Man.

These two narratives have a thorough want of unity with the wars of Revelation, and yet seem at first sight to allude to them. They have usually been so interpreted. They cannot, for a very simple reason, amongst others, that SS. Peter and Jude wrote years before the writer of Revelation, and wrote of events, or event, in the distant, very distant past. St. John wrote prophetically of the distant future. That chronology, though vague, is undeniable and conclusive.

St. Jude, indeed, speaks of an intervention of the Archangel Michael, which is utterly unknown in any other part of the Holy Scriptures, unless remotely alluded to by St. Peter on 'railing.' He records it wholly and entirely on his own authority, some 1,500 years after its action. It is said in Deuteronomy, that Moses was buried by the will of

God 'in a valley in the land of Moab,' and that 'no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.' St. Jude brings forward Satan as contending for the possession of his soul at the very outset of the Jewish history, and, of course, by implication for punishment in Hell. But it not only does that: it raises him to an elevation of great dignity—on an equality, if not higher than his antagonist; for we read, 'yet Michael the Archangel, when contending with the Devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke thee!"'—an extraordinary admission of the authoritative dignity of Satan.

To return from this episode of old time, Satan, though vanquished by St. Michael, and cast forth upon the earth, is in perfect freedom to continue his evil warfare on a lesser plane. St. Jude, as we have seen, is usually referred to for the reception of Satan as the leader of the fallen angels in the first rebellion, and his version is sometimes supplemented in support by the Revelation contest, though, as has just been said, it is absolutely beyond discussion in its non-fulfilment. It is *after* the sounding of the seventh trumpet in the future, and undoubtedly falls within the allegorical

character of the whole Book, save the chapters on the Seven Churches. The extracts from the two Apostles are intensely valuable, whatever their interpretation, as showing the old widespread belief in the power of Satan.

A heavy denunciation is pronounced, chapter xiv., on all who shall 'worship the Beast and his image, and receive his mark.' Their fate is to be 'tormented with fire and brimstone . . . and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever,' *i.e.*, from 'the bottomless pit.' The personality of the Beast, often sought for, is still unknown, though a key is offered in solution of the enigma in the number 666.

He himself is afterwards to be subdued with his ally, 'the false Prophet'—whoever that may be—by the armies of the Lord, and in the end both are to be 'cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone,' into the bottomless pit, for consistency in terms.

Their fate is of less moment to the distant generations of the world than the terrible sentence passed on all who should worship him. They are to be 'tormented with fire and brimstone.' Fire, ever fire! But it is not a bare statement, it is conjoined with a very

common Scriptural mystic form in prophetic writings, the worshipper 'shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation,' a sentence half-metaphorical, half-real, the wine-cup of His wrath and the fire and brimstone. They may be used together as signs of the greatness of the Divine indignation without remark; but they cause thought when the fire is to be received as a simple truth, and lost souls are to be plunged into it for 'ever and ever,' while the cup is confessedly symbolic—a sign of something else—the anger of the Lord overflowing in the wine-cup, and its results in the fire; the unreal and the real meeting together.

The reign of evil among men, and consequent sufferings, as described in Revelation, has been long, and well-nigh appalling. Wrath follows wrath, and judgment judgment, and still continues. Angels come forth scattering plagues unendurable over the earth. Triumphs of evil, sin, wickedness, and Satanic terror follow with rapid step. Repentance nowhere, a long history of human sin, wretchedness, and woe.

At length on the continuous excesses of human sin and wickedness, seven Angels stand

forth in heaven (chapter xvi.), having vials in their hands containing the seven last plagues, for in them is filled up 'the wrath of God.' The terrible plagues are specified. As 'the fourth Angel poured out his vial upon the Sun,' power was given him 'to scorch men with fire, and men were scorched with great heat.'

When the seven Angels had fulfilled their terrible mission with the vials, another Angel (chapter xviii.) appeared, announcing the fall of the mystic Babylon—Satan's stronghold, under 'the fierceness' of the wrath of God. It was followed by great rejoicings in Heaven, Alleluias and hymns of praise.

But the time at length is ripe, and the fate of Satan himself for a season is sealed. An Angel (chapter xx.) has come down once more with 'the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him.'

That is the Millennium; far, though, in the distant future. It heralds the First Resurrection of those who shall have died as Martyrs, and who have not worshipped the Beast; and

‘they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.’

It is a favourite hope and consolation for future generations. Not always ; it is held by eager spirits at times, spasmodically, as near—even to existing generations ; of all which the writer can say nothing beyond a passing thought—that it seems to express a fact and a reality amid a large amount of symbolic and allegorical writing. But whether real or allegorical, no doubt it expresses a long period of rest to the Church ; and in default of fixed exposition may—nay, must—be taken as it stands—interpreted at will.

The thousand years pass ; a period of rest, tranquillity, and unalloyed faith in Christ. The earth meanwhile has had peace, and freedom from unholy temptation, false thought, and fatal sin—a very golden age for the soul.

But at their end, in the inscrutable counsels of God, the Tempter ‘must be loosed a little season.’ He is set free from his prison, and suffered again to beguile the nations and destroy the souls of men. It cannot be without cause. It may be, that in the long Millennium of rest and peace impunity has begotten license, and given to thoughtless innocence an opening to sin. It may be that perverse, foolish, pre-

sumptuous human nature still, once more, required an enlightenment, and a right knowledge how God stood towards men, and men towards God. It would seem so. No reason is given. All we know to certainty is, that Satan is to be let loose for a time, and to have fatal power over the souls of men. How long he is to exercise that dominion is unknown—until the patience of God is again exhausted.

Meanwhile, in the exuberance of his freedom, he has meditated great conquests, and has gathered together a large army ‘from the four quarters of the earth . . . the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.’ His great aim and ambition is to re-conquer the mystic Babylon; and he has drawn up his vast army, and ‘compassed the camp of the Saints about, and the beloved City.’ Flushed with past victories, the great prize to all seeming is within his reach—and then? ‘Fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the Beast and the false Prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and for ever.’

This is the final decree and irreversible judgment on Satan. We read no more of him, or his angels. It is the last mention of his name.

He has vanished; powerless; held down by irresistible force in *the lake of fire*.

It will be observed, that the form of words is changed, whether with design or not we cannot say; but every deviation—the very least—from the general text should be accurately noted. Vanquished, and utterly broken, he is given over with the remains of his army to an irrevocable condemnation; but his sentence to outward semblance is changed. He is not sealed and closed within the bottomless pit under the angel's seal as before; he is 'cast into the lake of fire.' It may mean the same thing—the lake of fire in the broad, outspreading region below, characterized as the bottomless pit from its opening. It is quite necessary, though, that in such a question as this everything offering an explanation should, as far as possible, be explained.

Before the Millennium Satan was confined, under mystic seal, in the dominion prepared and assigned to him (in accordance with St. Matt. xxv.) in 'the everlasting fire *prepared* for the devil and his angels,' 'the bottomless pit.' It was thence that, as already stated, he issued as Apollyon, at the head of his array of armed 'locusts.' He was suffered by God to be set free from it for a season. He levies

armies, wages war, is subdued and cast into 'the lake of fire,' where the Beast and the false Prophet already are. He had not two dominions with his hosts of fallen angels. He must have been again cast down into his one dominion, or region, when again overcome, to be in harmony with former Scriptures.

The final fate and restraint of Satan is the prelude to the Great Day of Judgment. A great White Throne is set, and the risen dead, drawn from sea and land, stand before it to be judged out of the Books in which their deeds are recorded. The Book of Life, too, is opened, and all whose names are not found within it were 'cast into the lake of fire'—in the words of our Lord—'with the Devil and his angels.'

That is HELL. That, in fewest words, is the whole description of it in Revelation. It is plain, succinct, decisive. A lake of fire and brimstone for the lost. The same lake of fire for Satan. There is no modification for either, no hope, no release—it is eternal. The believer is almost constrained, on reading this final sentence, and forced inaction of the great Enemy, to ask where is his given power and tyranny, so often and so strenuously insisted upon over the lost human soul after the Judg-

ment. Nowhere. He is himself cast down, repressed, banished from the very sight of God's works 'for ever and for ever.'

In this regard it is in perfect unison with the teaching of our Lord. Hell, in His hands, is 'eternal,' 'everlasting.' Once condemned there is no return. Though St. John wrote the Visions some sixty years after our Lord's death he may have been influenced, or had influence poured into him during the Visions, by that teaching. There is a correspondence between them; the language is the same, and the doctrine is the same. We may judge the one by the other. The wicked are devoted to everlasting fire. The worshippers of the Beast—an equivalent to the blasphemously wicked in St. John's teaching—are condemned to be 'tormented with fire and brimstone for ever and ever. Wherein is the difference?' There cannot be the remotest doubt that the Visions of St. John were allegorical, unreal in every sense of the word, and suggestive, however rigidly they may have hereafter to be substantiated and proved by interpretation in the history of the world. The greatest present question to be determined lies in this: is the resemblance in phrase alone, or is it a true and intrinsic resemblance? Is the fire of Hell, as

spoken by our Lord, the flame in which Dives lay, real? or is it to be interpreted after the manner of Revelation? That is the whole gist of the matter for living men. Eternal it assuredly is. Is it the fire drawn from the Sun, flint, and electricity, known on earth as fire? The question, in the face of popular teaching and popular belief, is serious. It is serious too beyond popular teaching, in the recognition of material fire by the Church. The summing up of the Athanasian Creed declares that 'they that have done good shall go into life everlasting: and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.'

The Commination Service adopts the fearful language of the Psalm in a literal sense: 'He shall pour down rain upon the sinners, snares, fire and brimstone; this shall be their portion to drink.'

The illustrations from Revelation have been carefully and succinctly set forth. It is time to return to our Lord's treatment of demoniacs and the Parables.

In one of His progresses, He came into the country of the Gergesenes; and as He passed by the tombs, two men fierce and frantic came forth to oppose Him. They were demoniacs,

and held in such abject subjection by a foreign Power within them, that they had their dwelling in that cemetery, and were a terror to all who came near them.

In the version of the same incident in SS. Mark and Luke only one person is mentioned, perhaps the more prominent, and so the more remarked, whose case was the more terrific; for not only had he been bound, in the vain hope of restraining him, with fetters and chains, which he brake with superhuman strength, but he was possessed by so many devils that he was named by the country people round, or named himself, 'Legion.' Judæa at that time was garrisoned by Roman soldiers. A Legion consisted, as a mean, of 5,000 men. It only indicates a great many, or a play upon the word.

Our Lord stood still to heal them; but the devils speaking by the chief man, in terror of being at once ejected and punished, remonstrated. It has been alluded to already, but is important enough to bear repetition. They remonstrated, and cried out: 'What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? art Thou come hither to torment us *before the time*?' Before what time? They had a time by prescience in their minds; the time when the

mystic bottomless pit and lake of fire of Revelation should reach its full destination as the permanent, eternal abode of Satan and his evil world. The time when he and his subjects were not to torment the souls of men after Judgment; but were to be themselves tormented. A solemn fact and truth not always sufficiently considered.

As the devils are said to have reasoned with our Lord, they might in the spirit and belief of the age, which attributed all sufferings from disease, misfortune, and calamities of any kind, to acts of moral wickedness or violation of God's Law, they might have pleaded: 'These men have grievously sinned, and have been given to us by the Divine Will to torment, even before death, when they would have been conceded to us for ever.' Nothing of the kind; they were to be tormented themselves hereafter, and they knew it, torment severe in their kingdom of flame and fire.

In St. Matthew, chap. xiii., there are two Parables as remarkable and direct in their way as that of Lazarus. The first is of the tares and wheat, in which the fires of Hell are intimated by the consumption of the former in flame. The Parable is simple, but the disciples were not satisfied, or imperfectly instructed at that time

in allegorical allusion ; and they desired of our Lord an explicit interpretation. It was readily given. The sower is the devil ; the harvest the end of the world ; and as the tares were burned, so shall it be with sinners after the Judgment ; ‘the angels shall gather them together, and cast them into a furnace of fire ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

We may join this Parable with that of Dives and Lazarus. Dives is in flame, and the wicked at the end of the world will be cast into a furnace of flame. No allusion of any sort or kind is made to the demon subjects of Satan as agents in that Judgment. They are as if they were not ; not even Satan himself. The gatherers of the wheat and the tares combined are the angels of God, and they alone are the ministers of His sentence. Allegorical or real, the Judgment-seat is encompassed with the Holy Angels, and to them alone is committed the accomplishment of the decrees. Neither is there any hope or intimation given of remission or alleviation of the sentence. It is eternal.

A second Parable follows closely upon this, of precisely the same force and meaning, only under a different illustration. It is that of the fisherman’s net, which gathers into it fish of

every kind. The good are retained; the bad are cast away. So, continues our Lord, will it be at the end of the world with the souls of men. 'The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'

Thus is it again. Satan and his allies have nothing to do with the judgment. They are not its ministers; they are not even present at it. The angels of God come forth and cast the condemned souls into the lake of fire, where the devils, by their own confession, will be themselves in torment.

Leaving these early parables for the moment and passing on, we arrive at a most solemn description of the final Day of Judgment, and the Principles on which it is to be conducted.

The human race—the souls of all who have ever existed on the earth, 'all nations'—are to be gathered together before the throne of the Son of Man. That, I believe, is the usual interpretation, though, perhaps, a faulty one. It is, in point of fact, the *third act* of recorded Judgment, and is independent in principle and action of the other two. It stands by itself.

The first is that of the ten Virgins, who

undoubtedly, by the Parable, knew Christ, and awaited Him in faith, *i.e.*, lived in full knowledge of His religion.

If we look closely and strictly to the Parable, we shall be led to believe that it represents men living at the Second Coming of Christ. That thoroughly comes into unison with His own question to His disciples: 'When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?' The Parable seems to admit this interpretation by the fact of six of the Virgins going forth to buy oil *while* the rest accompany Christ into Heaven. Six are saved; six are condemned. That view also falls in with another Parable of a similar kind, when He directly forewarns His disciples of His Second Coming: 'Watch, therefore; for ye know not at what hour your Lord doth come.'

The second act is also of true believers in Him, though with varied proof and exponency of their belief—the holders of the talents.

The third, the most striking one, perhaps, in all Scripture, is on an entirely different principle. It has nothing in common with the other two. It includes heathens, idolaters, false worshippers of all ages and climes, 'all nations'—all *the* nations who are out of the pale and reach of Christianity. They are palpably dis-

tinguished and separated from the others ; they have lived their own lives, wholly astray from any true notions of God ; but not without marvellous systems of their own invention, save where, as exemplified in India and Egypt, they have been founded on remote and faint tradition. It was not, though, on their religion that they were arraigned and separated, but in the spirit of the second commandment, humanity and fellow-feeling, for the suffering and the destitute.

It has, though, to be considered that, at the time when our Lord thus divided these nations into two parts, He spoke to men who only knew the ancient world, the ‘*orbis veteribus notus*.’ The savage tribes in the vast continent of Africa, revelling in human sacrifice and revolting bloodthirsty rites, cannibals, and slave-raiders, were still in the darkness of time. They did not, therefore, enter into the illustrative Parable of our Lord to His disciples. He only spake of men and things which they and His hearers would understand.

The souls of the heathen nations were astonished when called up by Him to be judged. They were as men suddenly brought to trial before an earthly tribunal, whose edicts they had never wilfully offended, and, indeed,

of whose existence they were for the most part wholly ignorant. They were nations spread abroad over the world, known to Christ, but who was unknown to them. An exception is apparently to be made of the Greek and Roman nations, who had indeed heard of Christ, but had disowned Him. Referring to their professed ignorance, it may be suggested that they did not recognise the despised Jesus in the awful Majesty of the Son of God in Heaven. The Principle, too, of our Lord's Judgment, if known and recognised in the Schools of their Philosophers, was unknown to the bulk of the community.

The interpretation so far is open to argument. The Parable, though, seems to show it. The Judgment proceeds.

The heathen nations are divided, through our Lord's thorough knowledge and insight into every action of their past lives, into two vast, distinct, and separate assemblages for judgment. The good are placed on the right hand, the wicked on the left. The address which is then made to them in its combination with the saved and the lost is amongst the most beautiful and touching, if not the *most* beautiful and touching, passages in the whole of the Scriptures; amongst the most beautiful

in any work and language. There is no reason to quote it, for no one who has ever carefully read it can ever forget it.

There is, though, a principle involved in it which requires solemn attention, and which brings it into harmony with the Parable of Lazarus once more. Dives was condemned, as has already been noted, by the terms of the Parable, not because he had committed crimes, or rendered himself liable to penalties under Divine or human law. None were alleged against him. His sins were of omission. The condemnation of those on the left hand was in that respect precisely the same—sins of omission. In their case, though, the judgment was still more marked, because they were accused and condemned on a count of which they were, and pleaded that they were, wholly ignorant. Dives knew, and scorned what he knew.

Millions and millions amongst those supposed to be ranged on the left hand could never have heard the very name of Christ. They knew not His laws, His faith, His promises, His relation to God and themselves; they knew nothing of Him; they were heathens; idolaters in various ways from necessity; aliens from God by birth, education, and country;

immersed in spiritual darkness, and in the shadow of spiritual death. Some, free from these extremes, might have been bred up in selfish, self-seeking habits and principles, and were taught no other; barbarians, with minds darkened and dulled from all notions of human sympathy for sympathy's sake. Others, again, may have lived in countries where Christians were scattered here and there amongst the population, have seen them tyranized over without feeling, and turned aside from them with cold, callous hearts. They knew not Christ; they saw Him not in His disciples. They pleaded strongly: 'Lord, when saw we *Thee* an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger . . . and did not minister unto *Thee* ?'

It was urged in vain. The sentence came like a thunderbolt: 'Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it not to Me.' They were wanting in kind-heartedness and humanity. They sinned against the moral law—against 'the witness' which God had given of Himself in the secrecies of the hearts of every human being, and they were condemned at once to everlasting flames.

From risen souls on the right, spread also for ages on ages over the earth, but born in more

civilized countries, the same plea of ignorance had been adduced. They had not heard—or hearing, had been intensely prejudiced. All that they had done of good and benevolence had sprung out of the tenderness and sympathy of their own hearts. They had had compassion on their fellow-men in their misfortunes and distress, and had taken pleasure in doing them such slight good offices as had lain in their power.

It might have been in a more especial manner, that in times of persecution they had befriended some poor outcast believer, hunted down to the death for his adherence to Christ; and done their best to save him from the wild beasts of the arena and other cruel deaths by concealing him for a time. We learn from history many such acts of generous, sometimes of dangerous, kindness; but *not* arising from the love of Christ. It was no heart-stirring name in those times. Their plea of ignorance is also overruled: ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.’

The real ground, therefore, of the judgment of the condemned was a violation or non-observance of the second commandment—‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,’

and 'Do unto all men as ye would they should do unto you.' In other words, uphold God's work and design in the Creation of Man—kind and generous dominion over the lower races, and self-dominion as well.

It has been suggested in regard to the condemned that their lives might have been frightfully criminal, that they had been steeped in sin, and that our Lord was cognizant of all, even down to their least and latest guilt. It might so have been, and probably was, the life's course of many, *only* that was not their accusation, nor was it that which caused them to be condemned ; condemnation for atrocious sin would have caused no astonishment. The peculiarity of *this* wholesale condemnation is the total absence of any such indictment. And even in regard to atrocious sin we have our Lord's declaration that 'all manner of sin and blasphemy shall (may) be forgiven unto men, except a peculiar sin, which could only take place in the lifetime of our Lord. The blasphemies of men might be forgiven through the passionless exercise of God's mercy in their ignorance of what they blaspheme. It is with them, as our Lord said of His murderous enemies, 'they know not what they do.' That deed, in Christian belief, was the greatest sin

that man could by any means accomplish. It was forgiven by Christ.

If the Parable of Dives had been enlarged, it might have included many and various sins ; but its force and intention would have been weakened, if not lost. He was cast into Hell because he revelled in selfish and sumptuous fare, and was wanting in general humanity to his fellow-men.

And so of the lost souls. They saw the hungry, and turned away from them ; they saw the houseless, and gave them no shelter ; they saw the sick, and relieved them not. They saw the imprisoned and friendless, and they visited them not. Their doom, consequent on this want of human feeling, was dreadful : ‘ Depart, ye cursed, into the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.’

In this separation of the sheep from the goats, we must bear strictly in mind that our Lord was enunciating a Principle ; and in doing that He introduced an evident, perhaps an extreme, illustration of it—an illustration, not a fact. It no more restricts the individual mercy of God at the Judgment, than the Parable of Dives binds Him to cast every sinful misuser of wealth into Hell—though personally without any other fault or sin

amenable to Law. These Parables are not Laws and Decrees. They are a groundwork of action, and so may have a degree of elasticity at the times of their application.

Still, it is most true that in all the selections *hitherto* drawn from our Lord's teaching there has been one predominant idea—unmitigated, everlasting fire. That is the direct interpretation of these Parables, and is the direct inference also at our Lord's hand of the future Judgment, as interpreted by them alone.

Before closing this record of personal agony, it may be well to analyze the different modes in which it is set forth. In a matter of such extreme vital interest to the human soul—to the soul of every human being that ever existed on the earth, from the first breath of man to the last that shall be breathed—the issue should be clear, defined, and unmistakable. Is it so? I speak of course of the *fires of Hell* alone, which have been in consideration. Have they been set forth in such strict singleness and uniformity of mode, place and instrumentality, that the mention of one would be the mention of all? If it be not so, the believer is not only allowed,—he is bound for his own sake, as

well as in the cause of Truth, to test and investigate.

Our Lord, as we have seen, has spoken of the fires of Hell in Parable, in denunciation, and in a summary of the future Judgment. In our earliest Parable He has spoken of Hell as a flame torment, but placid and endurable. Abraham and Lazarus recline in happiness; before them is a narrow gulf, and beyond it a lost soul as he appeared in life, also reclining, encircled with flame. No Satan or Satanic angels. A solitary soul; troubled with his own torment, but occupied with anxiety for those whom he left behind.

In other places—with the exception of one to be hereafter noted in St. Mark—He speaks of ‘hell’ and ‘hell fire’ without addition, as in the offending hand, eye, and foot; or, as in the Parables of the tares and the net, the angels cast them, severally, ‘into *a* furnace,’ or ‘*the* furnace of fire.’

There is a difference in the setting of these Parables, which should be considered or marked. In the one Dives dies, and sinks at once, a solitary soul, into his solitary flame; in the others the Angels come forth at ‘the end of the world,’ and ‘gather’ and ‘sever’ the wicked and condemned, and ‘cast them

down,' as it were, headlong, into the furnace.

In the Judgment of the 'nations' the condemned half are sent into the everlasting fire; a fire '*prepared*' in a locality meted out '*for the devil and his angels.*'

There is no sort of difficulty, and very little for remark, in this. It only seems to show that our Lord, while indoctrinating the minds of the people with the sublimest truths of a saving Faith wholly new to them, strove with equal earnestness to warn them of the dangers and certain fate of rejecting His admonitions. In doing this, and with an intuitive knowledge of the bias of their minds, He fixed on the Satanic fire as a powerful lever in effecting His object. That was the dominant idea; He had to do with a people hard at heart for the most part, and who required strong stimulants to move them. The Parables and different modes of manifestation were subordinate to it.

Heaven and Hell have a different reception in different minds. Not adverse, but not precisely the same in all points and minutiae in any two. In regard to the former, the nearest approach will mostly be found in a renewal of earthly ties. In the latter, mitigation in some

vague form will be in general prominence, though with an adherence to the fire and flame, from the direct and explicit teaching of our Lord. But, however varied from the yielding faith or intellectual force of different minds, all conceptions and ideas founded in any way or degree on Scripture must inevitably meet in one solid assurance in the imperishable nature of the soul. It can never die; nor is there a single syllable throughout the whole of Scripture which intimates the possibility of its death or cessation. In David's child in the Old Testament; in Lazarus, the 'friend' of Christ, in the New; in the Roman doctrine of Purgatory; in the Millennium; as also in Brahminism, and in the various religious systems throughout the world, the undying nature of the soul is held as incontrovertible. The future of the lost, as well as of the saved, must be Eternal.

Do we usually realize the tremendous force of that word, ETERNAL? It is easily spoken, often without exactness of thought in the application, often in mere apposition with the shortness of our own human life. Let a few moments be given to it.

Suppose the seas encompassing the whole earth to be drawn from their depths *drop by*

drop into other depths, and that every drop should represent a year, or a hundred years, and that they should then be returned into their former channels *drop by drop* at the same rate; Eternity would be no nearer its consummation at the end of this immeasurable time than at its beginning. And that process might be repeated thousands of times, and Eternity would remain just and precisely the same as when the first drop fell. That would be the course of an Eternity of fire and flame.

Or, to take another illustration. Let every grain of sand on the surface of the whole globe in every country, in every desert land, count at the same rate, each grain for a year, or a hundred years, and let that process be repeated many times, a hundred times, or a thousand times, Eternity at the end of each cycle would still be the same, no nearer an end than when the first grain of sand began its endless course.

There is no exaggeration—no sort of exaggeration in this. A person who should have given no thought to these things might characterize both illustrations as a frightful extravagance or absurdity. It is no absurdity. It is simply what such a process would be, and it should be our common, or rather commonest, thought of Eternity. It is well to look things in the face,

direct; and not weaken or fritter away the most solemn things that can attach to life by the iteration of mere words.

Of course such thought would be bewildering to the strongest minds when seriously held in meditative contemplation; but that is a poor excuse, or subterfuge, for not contemplating it seriously at all. It is not imaginative invention. It is a reality palpably existent.

A kindred object may be found in Endless Space. They are true kindred in one sense, for they exist together as twins.

If we take the highest unit, and add cyphers to it, each representing a mile, and let them in imagination reach from the earth to the Sun, as in a common addition sum, we are no nearer a solution, when the Sun is reached, than when we first started with the unit 9; and that cypher process might go on to Sirius and thence to the other fixed Stars. It would be no nearer completion. Space might again begin, or be said to begin, when that limit had been reached. No great wisdom would be shown in casting that Space from our thoughts because of its bewildering immensity. We inherit both.

Eternity is the fast possession of every human being as soon as born. It accompanies

him to the verge of the extremest old age, and continues after death into that future state which our lives shall have determined on earth. It is a possession that we cannot set aside if, from any cause known only to ourselves, we would fain refuse it. We cannot escape or fly from Eternity to our soul. Nay, as already intimated, Life may be said to be of the eternal Essence of God Himself; for it is expressly stated in Genesis that God 'breathed into his nostrils the breath of Life, and Man became a living soul.' That is the faith of the believer in Genesis. Any lesser interpretation would be forced and meaningless. God by the action of His Will formed Man; gave him life and soul by a particle of His own spirit, and hence the soul's immortality. It has no other foundation in the Old Testament, and is thence implied throughout. Take that away, and you have not a grain of sand for the foundation of the soul's existence in the Old Testament. Raise your fortress upon that, and it is impregnable.

Eternity has its happiness in contemplation as well as its dread; praise and gratitude to God for His blessings in life; its given comforts; its given affections; His protection, and the greatest blessing in any life, the calm

of a true conscience. It has its happiness, too, in the thought of seeing God as He is. Not as Moses saw Him in the faint, dying glories of His disappearance; but 'face to face.' Not 'as through a glass darkly,' as imagined by St. Paul. It has, too, the happiness of seeing and understanding all His Works in the endless Universe; of partaking His glory in them. The soul will be in spirit with God, and where God is—if the thought may be innocent and harmless—where the Spirit of God is, the spirit of the saved soul may be also. Not bound by the flesh, or if bound by an outward form, yet so far etherealized as to move as angels are supposed to move—free, uncircumscribed, at will.

More than this may not be conjectured; less would bring down angelic life to human life on earth. Faith may supply the rest to faithful souls; and that cannot greatly err—if even in a degree faulty—so long as it is exercised in perfect reverence and humility.

It may be, too, as well that the hope may be realized, so fondly indulged in the weakness and tenderness of our hearts and nature, of rejoining and recognising those whom we have most honoured, or loved, on earth. Not weakness—a wrong word. The disciples will know

each other, as declared in Scripture. As assessors they will know their contemporaries on earth, and be known by them. And the link thus begun—it can scarcely be called an earthly fancy—will extend to others, to the wisest; the most famous; to the great ones of the earth in all time. We know not how far, and thought, if wise, will be content to leave it for completion in its own time, but hold it as a pleasing and cherished hope for present consolation.

The thought of Eternity brings naturally into the foreground—not to say of necessity—the fate of lost and sinful souls. The more so, that, as far as the Parables have hitherto been touched, they have begun and ended in eternal fires and flame; the flame of the rich man; the fire of the nations ‘prepared for the devil and his angels;’ and the penalty of fire for the supposed retention of the offending eye, hand, and foot.

The lost in everlasting flame! Can human thought, in its most unbridled imaginative mood, invent any amount of crimes and atrocities, committed in our short life on earth by man against man, to call down an eternal

existence of such horrible suffering? *Man against Man*—for human crime, as crime, is restricted to that; it cannot reach God. Horrible at times among civilized races; perpetually, so to say, in savage lands; but every crime or atrocity committed on the earth from the first ages, tens of thousands of years ago, down to the hour in which this is written, is confined to crime on earth. It cannot rise in its effects above it. God's purposes may be, and have been delayed by Man's sin, perversity, and strenuousness in evil. They are only delayed, and delayed to Man's loss. What is the whole history of Man and the earth itself in comparison with eternity? A speck; a second of time. Man's sin, infidelity, and wanton wickedness may enlarge, so to speak, and prolong the time. Can anyone in his senses believe that the speck and the second can affect God, except in compassion for human folly and weakness? Man's sin reach God! as well suppose that a mote in the Sun can affect the life of Man on this earth. Our sins can only reach ourselves; and hence intrudes with double force the idea of eternal fire for Man's sin against himself. A false nature may deny and blaspheme God. It stops there. It may scatter infidelity abroad in

eloquence or philosophic phrase. It injures Man, the persuader and the persuaded ; it cannot reach God. It may scorn and reject His Laws, and so scoff at Revelation. The dying words of our Lord may be applied to any such in their full force of ignorance in what they do. The Laws were made and imposed for Man's good. The Revelation, or Holy Word, was given for the guidance of His soul into the Presence of God in the happiness of Heaven. The rejection of either is no gain to him. It deprives him of a true guide in life, and acts adversely on him hereafter.

History of old and the History of to-day have on record fiendish, devilish crimes, cruelties, and wickedness, which make the blood run cold. And men of hardier nature have wished in their horror and indignation, that the perpetrator might suffer a hundredfold and more, all the tortures that he had inflicted. A hundredfold is much. Is there one of the most hardy who, on reflection, would doom the most demon criminal that ever lived to flame and fire, not for a hundredfold ; but for the endless ocean drops of a hundred years each in time ? If he would, pain to him must be a word, not in any degree an experience, and human feeling nowhere.

It is very true, that the action of fire on a spiritual body may be so far different from all action on our own, as to be endurable. Satan and his angels were supposed, in some sort, to live in it. Dives does not writhe in flame, and is able to throw back affectionate thoughts to his five brethren in life. Still, at its least, it is torture, great, parching, heavy to be borne, and everlasting.

Men, as said, may disown God; may blaspheme; may be atheists, and propagators of atheistic principles; and so, in a manner, disown and defy Him. They may be in modern phrase Agnostics, and by implication accuse the Almighty, that He had not given such clear and indubitable signs and manifestations of His existence, and their relation towards Him, that error and erroneous thought would have been impossible; that *then* they would have acknowledged and adored Him. They imperil themselves, they touch not God. These sins are amongst men's heaviest against Revelation. Avoiding these, they may still calmly live in various kinds of sin and guilt; in irreverence and forgetfulness of Him. Many do. Have they, can they have, any true ideas of what God is?

It falls within the course of this writing to dwell for a few moments on it.

The old ideas of the world were chiefly, if not solely, anthropomorphic. Necessarily so in idolatrous nations; actually so in Mosaic History. The Lord, in the writings and teaching of Moses, was capable of a variety of feelings and motives of action, as 'anger,' 'vengeance,' 'jealousy,' and other passions strictly pertaining to the evil part of the nature of Man. He was not only capable, but was said to have specially exercised them on the nation; not at times, but throughout their history. We meet continually with such expressions as these: 'I will walk contrary to you in fury' (Lev.), 'The fierce anger of the Lord is not turned away' (Jer.), 'I will set my jealousy against thee' (Ezek.), 'The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries' (Neh.). There is a current of similar passages throughout the Old Testament, as every reader knows.

No doubt they may be sublimated by interpretation, but in their exercise on the nation they approach the character given them; and without question, the Israelitish mind received the indulgence in them by the Almighty as a simple, natural fact. God was like themselves. The grossness of their mind, so often alluded

to in Scripture, forbade their reception otherwise. They looked for their exercise on their frequent violations of religious and moral Law, content to turn them aside by contrition and stern repentance, the Scriptural 'sackcloth and ashes.'

It would be waste of time to go through the other religions of the world, in their anthropomorphism. We have only to do with the one from which our own has descended; and the religious system of Moses cannot be studied without seeing that it was strongly impressed with that character. It breathes through the whole of it, not only in 'anger,' 'jealousy,' 'vengeance'; but in such expressions as these: 'the Lord saith,' 'the Lord appeared,' 'the Lord came down,' and others of a like form and nature. The recital of the forty days' sojourn in the Mount; and the Lord speaking, 'face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend,' follow the same idea. It was not an actual appearance in any of these and other numerous cases—not God as He is—but it gave the idea of Personality, though invisible.

That idea, or rather belief, passes through the whole of the Jewish History, and is abundantly shown as well in the Visions of the Prophets. Isaiah in the year that King

Uzziah died, 'saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, and all the host of Heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left.' It would be superfluous to multiply instances. It is the very kernel of the Old Testament.

It is true, that in one of the episodes of Moses' life, the Spirituality of God was apparently prominent, when he was hid in a cleft of the rock, while the mystical glory and brightness of the Almighty passed by him : but at the same time, the predominant idea is intimated in the answer of the Lord to his position : 'thou canst not see My face ; for there shall no man see Me, and live.' A correspondent episode fell in the marvellous life of Elijah, when the Lord passed by him as 'a still small voice,' while he stood 'in the entering of the cave,' where he lay hid from the face of Ahab. These instances are not strictly of any anthropomorphic character ; but rather, as said, declarative of Spirituality. Nevertheless, like the mystic signs and symbols which prevail from Genesis to Revelation, they still give faint representations of the same idea of Personality.

The first real declaration of the true Nature of the Almighty was given by our Saviour, though scarcely understood. It was when He

said to the woman of Samaria, 'God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.' Scarcely understood; for even that late age was not ripe for the full development of the Almighty's Spiritual Being; and was used sparingly by our Saviour in His subsequent teaching. His object was not to withdraw the national worship from the Almighty, as it had been held exclusively to Him; but to lead their minds by degrees to the Trinitarian idea, combining the Father and the Son at that time, to be completed hereafter by the descent of the Holy Ghost, and reuniting the eternal Trinity of three forces in One Essential Godhead. Commonly, He associated Himself with the Almighty in such expressions as, 'I and the Father are one;' and in the reproof to Philip, 'he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' He taught for the most part in the current of the age, not in advance of it.

Since that time eighteen centuries have rolled on, and hundreds of thousands of centuries, as generally received, have completed their cycle since the foundation of the world. We stand ourselves in a comparatively advanced age in either case. We have passed through the darkness. We have entered into

the light. What are our modern ideas of God? Are they worthy of us, or equal to the knowledge with which we have been gifted?

It is conceded, of course, that the man has not been created—he never will be—who can have adequate conceptions of what God is. His being, nature, mind, imagination, are each and all too gross and materialistic. But he may form juster ideas by patient, reverent thought, than by yielding himself, as it were, blindfold to the common crude notions of the world around him. He may be on the right track, though he may never reach its end.

The first step towards a right appreciation of God is to get thoroughly quit of all thoughts of materialistic thrones, palaces, brilliant courts of ministering Angels, and all the majestic assimilating pomp of earthly Monarchs; elders before the throne, and angels surrounding it in bright array. When found in Scripture, they are nothing more than mere signs and symbols; and if suffered to enter the mind in any degree as realities, withdraw it, not only from all just conceptions, but from any approach whatever to God as He is. In strict terms, it is making God a symbol. The attempt to describe that which is indescribable has led too often to

gross, earthly ideas of the Almighty, wholly remote from any possibility of truth. He comes forth thus too often in our Hymns and other parts of our Services as a Personality; as a central Figure, enthroned on high, and overlooking and governing the Universe by His Will, aided by the secondary forces of ministering Angels. It is allowable—more than allowable—to imagine a central authority and government. Our Lord has sanctioned it when He declared that at the Last Judgment He ‘shall sit upon the throne of His glory,’ and that His disciples at the same time shall sit on ‘twelve thrones.’

But this language is wholly allegorical, not real. In another place He speaks of Heaven as ‘God’s throne.’ We may, if we so will, create a glorious vision in our minds, as existing far beyond all the Almighty’s Works in Creation—or in the midst of them—whence His authority spreads out and penetrates in all directions to the farthest limit of them; and we may people the vision with angelic Beings of transcendent brightness, as allowed by Holy Writ, but religiously guarded from portraying the Godhead with any admixture of human form. There lies the danger.

God is a Spirit: but as seen in all represen-

tations of the Father, from Michael Angelo's 'Last Judgment' downwards, there is invariably an assimilation to the human form. It is not too much to say that in more than one instance the head of Moses and the painted representation of the Father might be interchanged. The ideal is a Man of venerable Old Age, with the supposed wisdom of Old Age, on a throne, like a Monarch of Eastern climes, dispensing Laws and Justice around—sometimes solitary, sometimes brilliantly surrounded.

The folly of this—to use no harsher term—only requires a second thought, if it even does that. The form and ideal beauty of Man is great to Man, and its ideality is, perhaps, greatly increased by its assumption by our Lord in His human life. Its likeness to inferior races detracts somewhat from its superiority; and in regard to our Lord's assumption of it, as He came to reclaim and reinstate a fallen race, He could by no reasonable possibility come to it except in the form of that race, and, as an almost necessary consequence, will, or may, preserve it when He adjudges it at the Last Day. We know nothing of other worlds. They may have fallen, or have been inaccessible to fall; but if accessible to Future Judgment,

the Judge would naturally be in the same form as the arraigned.

But to suppose that the Almighty—the Creator of tens of millions of worlds—bears in the remotest conceivable idea the form of Man in a third-rate planet of an imperfect three-hundredth-rate system—for aught we know—and that that resemblance is akin to a gorilla, or any other created animal whatever, is next to an idiot's dream.

More need scarcely be said, save this, that any sort of outward form in God, like all other forms, confines its *presence* to definite localities.

The first thoughts—common natural thoughts—in relation to God tend to Infinite Space and Eternal Time, alike without beginning and without end; both uncreate. God is uncreate, and therefore Eternal; if not, the dilemma is simply placed a step back without approaching a step nearer solution. Thus far is certainty; beyond is hypothesis founded on faith. The Almighty Spirit may fill all Space, or be circumscribed at Will within the range of His Works. The material atoms which combine to form them may—not to say must—have been created by His Will. If not, they floated

in the rare and subtle ether before, and were inseparable from it—themselves eternal and uncreate. These questions must be left on the plain and evident ground that they are beyond human reason and intellect, and if attempted end alone in phrases. Nor are they in any way material to faith, prayer, or conduct in life.

God as a Spirit, incorporeal, existent in Space, culminates in one dominant idea at the least: that He is perpetually present from one extremity of His Works to the other, inclusive of their enormous circle. The fixed Stars are so far off, that their distance is confessedly beyond all human calculation; and it is by no means an improbable conjecture that they may be in turn the starting-point of others lost alike in distance.

That notion, though, only contemplates our Northern Pole Star hemisphere. Go to ✓ Australia, and in the region of the Southern Cross there will be found by Astronomers just the same plane of fixed stars towards the Southern Pole, completing the incalculable Circle of both hemispheres. And God, the Omnipotent, Omniscient Spirit, is Omnipresent with them all. That is God in one aspect.

This view may be startling to some from its very simplicity. It may jar on others by its extreme Spirituality ; attenuating, etherealizing the Almighty into a Being shadowy and unsubstantial. They cannot grasp it. Too wide ; too diffuse ; too generalizing and remote from their own passage through life, and the objects, hopes and interests of their prayers. They admit that the countless Creations may be under His guidance and control ; but they would rather imagine Him as present in their own world, hovering over ; directing and supervising the affairs of men, and governing others by the power and force of His Will, or by the intervention of Angels. That gives a dignity to our petty Planet—soothing, but weak. The supposed Will in this case is equal in weakness, if not more so ; for it is either a separation from God, or His Spirit accompanies it. If His Spirit accompanies it, well ; the question ceases. If it does not, but is a force, like the breath from the body, the Omnipresence is preserved, only under a different form. It is by no means an extravagant supposition that the general idea of the Omnipresence of God is confined to our World—thoughtlessly ; and that such a belief is a solid testimony to His Greatness. But if you allow God at all, you

must, in the merest consistency, allow Him to be Omnipresent through all Creation. You cannot allow any part of Creation to be *without* God. It would be an absurdity. He governs all; He is present with all. The magnitude of the proposition startles. It is only because our faculties and compass of thought are so limited. As we look up to the Stars at night we look with wonder and reverence. As we move in our own wandering Star, we look to Him as our Guide, Ruler, Protector. He is all this, and more to us; and as we thus draw comfort, and the strong sense of security to ourselves, we may apply to other systems, as well as our own, the spirit of that soothing if extreme declaration of our Saviour: 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father.'

God is everywhere. I pray in my sleeping-room with half-closed lips, breathing my words, scarcely syllabling them. Why? Because God is near me; because, while God is in Sirius or the Pleiades, He is also 'about my path, and about my bed, and spieth out all my ways.' I chasten my thoughts. Why? Because I believe that God is ever spiritually in them, like the air I breathe, and that He reads

them as in living written characters. One who does not read my thoughts is dependent on my words, whether in contrast, or in accordance with my actions—deceptive it may be in both. The Almighty, as Judge, is present of necessity in my thoughts.

Someone may say: ‘I cannot pray, as it were, to Space; I want an object.’ It is not to Space, but to God—who is present Spiritually, co-existent in every atom of Space—that you pray. You are surrounded, enveloped, if I dare use such an expression, with God.

‘Then, in that case, God is not only present at every good deed of men, but at every horror, vileness, atrocity; and this in savage as in civilized countries over the whole world.’ Undoubtedly. Is it not the very essence of the Future Judgment, that every soul should be separately adjudged according to its deeds? Deeds of the highest honour; deeds of ill, too often shrouded in impenetrable darkness in life; and too often sealed from all human knowledge or suspicion, in the night of the grave. If God, in Spirit, were not present, could the Future Judgment individually be just? As it is, to use the beautiful, far-searching words of the Psalm: ‘The darkness is no darkness with Thee, but the night is as clear

as the day ; the darkness and light to Thee are both alike.'

It is not, perhaps, in all natures to realize or feel comfort in this atmosphere of Spirit. Let it be so. They feel a want. They can fix their thoughts *centrally*, without incurring a gross personality. God may be to them, Ezekiel-like, a glorious Vision, a bright effulgence, accompanied with all the splendour their imagination may be capable of. The Vision may send forth its rays in an increasing circle on all sides, and, like the rays of the Sun, they may be invisible in their progress ; but, unlike those rays, be still invisible when the worshippers are reached. All that depends on the faith, nature, warmth, or coldness of feeling, the idiosyncrasy of the individual. It is enough if the statement be true. Its application is secondary.

In our human ideas, as has been said, we may rationally and devoutly believe that there is a centre, whence all the stupendous governance of the Universe flows. We can raise and direct our thoughts to that, as to a fixed point in a fixed idea, and still have the overwhelming feeling that God in Space is above us, and around us, knowing every pulsation of our inmost heart.

This thought only relates to God in our common idea of the Almighty. There are those who only, or chiefly, pray to Jesus. Every prayer that we offer to the Almighty is in the name and mediation of our Lord—understood, if not expressed; though no doubt it has a tendency to connect the human form in our prayers, if not in our thoughts, of God. In other words, our ideas of the Father, as a Spirit, may become more or less shadowy in being offered through the medium of the Son. That must rest on strength of mind and purpose. Neither can be given by precept, though both may by earnest prayer.

But independent of the Essential Oneness of the Holy Trinity, the separation of the human body of Christ is only for a time, as is certified, amongst other passages, by a remarkable one by St. Paul: ‘Then cometh the end, when He’—Christ—‘shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. . . . And when all things shall be subject unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.’

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Ample scope, meanwhile, is afforded for the peculiarities and diversities in Man's nature. No two persons may have precisely the same ideas, no two pray in precisely the same form, with the same words or thought, or in the same manner; yet, though from many causes faulty and incomplete, in the main thought, that God is always at their side, they may all be sound, solid, and true.

Without question this mode of treating the subject is of the narrowest. Volumes have been written on Faith in analysis of God, and of God in analysis of Faith; and kindred objects as well on that broad foundation. They are the support of the great fabric of Christianity. But within its range and shelter are the souls of all Christian men—their one great, true, solid treasure. They have to guard it; and if they would guard it well, it must be done under the profound sense of God's immediate, universal, and continued Presence. It is the very elementary idea of God, and what God is. Directly they go from that, they go from God. Directly they think carelessly or slightingly of it, they depreciate God. We may argue, and define, amplify, or subtilize as we will, but we shall never get over that simple proposition.

Leaving this short digression, we return to the Parables. Hitherto, their teaching has been of an extreme severity; eternal fires and the control of the Devil and his angels over the lost soul in Hell; no intermission; no leniency; no mitigation. We have happily, by God's blessing, another group which tends to modify that severity, and release the conscience from the terrible weight of receiving it by the letter. Nor is this group inferior to the other in weight or solemnity. Nor is it given by itself, separated from the rest, and so to be received and interpreted; but it is intermixed, interwoven in the great Design as occasion offered. Nor are the Parables spoken—if the word may be used—off-hand, or on high occasions, as if to lessen the immediate dread of the sterner judgment, and lead minds up to it by slower and more thoughtful degrees. They are as searching and as full of dignity and authority as the most terrible and severe. They do more. They tend, in some sort, to give a reason why this terrific doctrine was at the time so calmly received, that not a syllable of doubt, as far as can be gleaned from the Evangelists, or any slowness of acceptation was manifested. They might in their degree have tended to modify it.

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The twelve disciples listened to the denunciation of fire, and received it without question; the people who followed in their crowds implicitly received it. Among them were intermixed many of the dominant orders of the Scribes and Pharisees; but no word of doubt or remonstrance seems to have been spoken by them. Hell, and the fires of Hell; Satan and Beelzebub had gradually become familiar to them, and no demur was raised to their use.

Our Lord on one occasion was so moved by Pharisaic hypocrisy and wickedness as to put a hardness on His gentle Nature, and to denounce the sect at the end of a long enumeration of their offences in the tremendous words: ‘Ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of Hell?’ It was received in silence; acquiesced in without a murmur. Did the Pharisees receive the denunciation in our modern sense? I doubt it. They would scarcely have bowed down to it in silence. They interpreted.

The masses in all countries are unreflecting. In ancient days they were at the same time ignorant and untaught. At one time when our Lord was teaching the people in the Courts of the Temple, they listened with wonder and astonishment, not only at the depth and novelty

of His teaching ; but that He should have any knowledge at all. They looked to the humility of His birth at Nazareth, and said one to another : ‘ How knoweth this man letters, having never learned ? ’ They looked on Him as one of themselves, on a higher level, and so able to teach ; but still with ideas and thoughts in common. They were told to believe in Satan and eternal flames, and they believed.

It is hard, though, to think that the Scribes and Pharisees believed with the same absence of reflection. Satan was within their Creed. He was at the head of their Scriptures as the Serpent in Eden. He was in Job ; in the reign of Saul ; in that of David ; in the prophet Zechariah ; and in the demoniacal possession of their own age ; but in not one single instance had he ever come before them as the future avenger of God’s broken Law, a minister of justice on the lost souls of men. They would have scoffed at and ridiculed the idea.

That office, conjoined with the existence of his fiery kingdom, was *first* spoken of and proclaimed by our Lord Himself. Whether with the abruptness as written by St. Matthew, or with unrecorded preparation, we do not know. It is enough that the doctrine was an integral

part of our Lord's Mission. He came to clench the belief in a future life with irrevocable certainty, which had been held loosely in the books of the Old Testament, and was openly denied in His own time by the wealthiest and most powerful sect of His nation. A means to that end was a striking contrast of the happiness of the blest and the fate of the last; and He used it.

But it gives small credit to the intelligence of the Scribes and Pharisees to suppose them so ignorant of allegorical teaching that they received and determined everything by the strictness of the letter. On the contrary, they delighted in mystical interpretation. They were bred up in it. Ezekiel revels in it: so does Daniel; it is seen in Isaiah; it abounds in the Minor Prophets, and is thoroughly in harmony with the genius of the nation. They had the Law and the Prophets at their fingers' end, and commented freely on them—on the former with notable perversions. In the same spirit they may be assumed to have listened to our Lord's doctrines: never with assent, mostly with cavils and objections. If they received any in silence, it is not unreasonable to suppose that they received them after their own manner.

In St. Mark, chap. ix. (already quoted from St. Matthew), there is a solemn warning thrice spoken, which may be taken as an appropriate introduction to the modifying Parables. If thy hand, foot, or eye offend, cast them from thee. Better go into life, or Heaven, maimed or halt 'than to go into Hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched, where *their worm* dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.' The captious intellect of the Pharisees would scarcely, in any case, have missed the obvious inconsistency of the worm living in the fire. They would have marked the words, and have penetrated our Lord's thoughts. It is self-evident to our modern thoughts that 'the worm' is not to be received as literal. It is an illustration, not a reality. 'Their worm' is the gnawing, the grief, and the torture of a conscience too late for recall or remedy; an application of the fearful word 'remember' in the Parable of Dives.

There is no difficulty in that; it will probably be acknowledged at once. But then comes the reflection once again that, if the worm be symbolical, the fire must partake of the same character, and be symbolical too. You cannot have the two words in close apposition, and place one as a symbol, and the

other as a reality. They stand together ; indissoluble by common reason. If the 'worm' is to be received as conscience eating for ever into the soul, the 'fire' is to be taken as the consuming agonies of remorse, or kindred agony, in the same soul. Worm and fire are one : an amplification of each other—memory and remorse.

These warnings are of the greater importance in that they are not embedded in Parables, which different minds might view in different ways, but are direct issues of the Future Judgment. Their interpretation carries a vital Principle of that Judgment. If the fiery material be assumed, and the existence of the worm—salamander-like—be held consistent with it, fire and flame are the sure destiny of the lost ; and all other teaching of the Scriptures, by Parable or otherwise, must fall into accordance with it. That is admitted freely. In its very directness it rules paramount. But the concession stands with equal force on the other side ; and passing through much doctrine and many Parables, from which the fire and flame are wholly absent, meets finally at the Judgment in mitigated form. In other words, if the fire be on one side of our Lord's denunciations, and a total absence of fire on the

opposite, the latter has an equal right to interpretation as the former.

Thus far the stern severity of one set of Parables has been paramount. It remains to be seen whether it can be counteracted.

It is mere conjecture ; but the very suddenness and abrupt, unprefaced denunciation of the undying and everlasting fires in these warnings, as related by St. Matthew, coming unexpectedly on them as an unimagined declaration of Divine Wrath, might have led reflective hearers the more readily into a mystical solution, so common in Scripture, which would lighten the horror without interfering with the Judgment. It was too new, too unthought of to be received at a word. The Eternity might remain ; the prophetic Hell, or Hades, might remain, as might the lost state of the condemned ; but not the material fire.

That fire, heard of suddenly for the first time—not dreamed of in their own minds, but which might bear so powerfully, if not fatally, on their own state and mode of living—might naturally cause thoughtfulness and inquiry into the exactness of meaning, and lead them, in relief, to their accustomed allegorical and symbolical alleviation.

The moral would strike in that interpretation as well, and have its effect in its clearness and simplicity. It is better to cut off cherished and darling sins, which bring you into offence with God, than to indulge them in life, and mourn them in unavailing grief and sorrow of soul hereafter.

Thus far in the quasi-probable and natural adoption and interpretation of our Lord's threat, or denouncement of sins, hateful to God and prejudicial to the soul, by the fire that shall never be quenched, and the worm that shall never die. And if it had proceeded from Himself alone, as a first intimation of the horrible destiny of the wicked, it might have called forth all—and more than all—that ever has been written to soften and attenuate it. But it did *not* originate with our Lord, and so did not strictly form His own denunciation.

It was a quotation from Isaiah, chap. lxvi., which had no allusion whatever—none in any conceivable degree—to a Future State; but to the Call of the Gentiles, and the rejection of God's own rebellious people; to the triumph of the Church, and the confusion of His enemies.

After much glowing language in the present and preceding chapter on the happiness of

the regenerated nations in 'new heavens and a new earth,' a tremendous sentence is pronounced in allegorical language on the wicked : ' For behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire, and by His sword, will the Lord plead with all flesh ; and the slain of the Lord shall be many ' (verses 15, 16).

Of course there can be no manner of question as to these verses being allegorical. They represent severe temporal evils, and temporal judgments on the Jews—His own once favoured nation ; a nation which had continued under His firm favour and protection until they had alienated both by sins of an intolerable magnitude and character.

The sentence, indeterminate in its accomplishment, may be subjected to varied expositions ; it may partially be hazarded in the Captivity, the Conquest by the Romans, and the Dispersion. That is of less consequence, at present, than its absolute distance from any approach to the Future Judgment. It does not touch it by any possibility of assertion, repetition, or the subtlest special pleading. It belongs to Gentile Call and Israelitish sins of

idolatry and persistent wickedness, and to nothing else.

A specimen of their contempt of God—it is not too hard a word—is given in chap. lxxv. 3, 4; and in the following chap., verse 17. Outrageous sins against a vital principle of the Levitical Law. In the height of the Divine indignation we read: that they ‘shall be consumed together, saith the Lord.’ Temporal judgments still, and nothing else.

Then follows—to lighten the mere quotation of verses—a glorious description of the Missionary work among distant heathen nations, and the success which, under His Grace, shall attend their labours; and how they shall be gathered together into the fold of the true Church, and see God’s goodness in combination with His glory. And how nations far distant—almost beyond existent knowledge—should hear and declare His ‘glory among the Gentiles.’ And how the name of ‘the Lord of Hosts’ and His true worship—as said with equal truth 300 years after by Malachi—should be known ‘from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same,’ and be magnified and adored.

That is much, but more remains. Israel was not only dispossessed, disinherited from

its obstinacy in sin, but the Gentiles were appointed in their place. The Priests and Levites, as a distinct Order, were separated from the body of their nation. The Call of the Gentiles annihilated their Order. God declares that He will take Gentile—converted—Priests to minister unto Him, instead of the Levites. St. Paul excuses himself for ‘ministering’ Jesus Christ to the Gentiles on that very ground in Romans.

All this and more is to be gleaned from the few verses of Isaiah at the conclusion of his great reign of Prophecy. But two verses still remain, and they must perforce be quoted. One, the twenty-third, declares that the whole world shall be converted in the course of ages, and worship before the Lord : in other words, that, as the Christian world interprets it, the whole Gentile world in the course of ages shall become worshippers of Christ, and shall also see the decay and death of all other systems, more or less false, which have preceded it. His own nation might have been in the mind of Isaiah, as the paramount religious nation possessing the Truth in his time. We know not; but he declares on the word of Inspiration that, in the end, the Gentile-Christian religion should go forth in triumph, and see the end of

all other false religions, or systems fallen from the truth. But the Prophet must declare it in his own words—a gloss would be wholly out of place—chapter lxvi. 24: ‘And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against Me; for *their worm shall not die*, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorrence to all living flesh.’

All allegorical. The carcases were not human carcases. They could not be looked upon ages on ages afterwards in the gradual and continuous Call of the Gentiles. The idea would be foolish; and yet they were to be looked upon. How? By History aided by the imagination. As generations rose, they looked back, as our own does; and as they looked back they came *ideally* on the Prophet’s carcases of the slain—on their false doctrines and wickedness which had caused them to be *ideally* slain; and as they looked, ‘the worm’ of corruption was in them, and ‘the fire’ and ‘the fury’ of the Lord was *ideally* upon them; and they were, in their idolatries, sins, abominations, ‘an abhorrence’ to all living men, who read their history and saw their fate. Where in all this is the future fiery region for the soul? Nowhere.

I am not aware of any exaggeration in what has been written. It seems to flow naturally from the text—written, designedly, in plain, almost colloquial language. If the carcasses of the wicked and their worm and fire are to be in their future combination in Hell, it will be difficult to imagine the mode in which the Church, or the converted Gentiles, are to see them, especially as they are to be seen by ‘all living men.’

But it is an allegory. True ; but allegory, if pertaining to human action, must contain things consonant with it. However dark, or mysterious, it must not be above *all* application. The concluding allegory of Isaiah can alone apply to human life and human matters in its *strictness*. It may apply, or be applied, beyond ; but with a reserved sense within the application.

Possibly the advocates of flame may urge that our Lord, by adopting the phrase, made it His own. Unquestionably He did so at the time, and affixed His own severe meaning on it to all appearance. The words suited the occasion and the time, and struck an awe into the hearts of the multitude that followed Him. We may fairly assume that it did so in the hearts of those among them who were un-

familiar with their Prophets, and knew not that the sentence and the denunciation had been written down upwards of seven hundred years before without any reference at all to the stern realities of the Future.

The effect on those who had their Prophets in memory would be far less. They might, and probably did, receive it by implication, but held still to the sense in which the Prophet recorded it. And the silence and solemnity in which the denunciation was apparently received might—if such a word may be said—have induced our Lord to have repeated it afterwards on one or two occasions, as in the Parable of the tares; and so, indirectly, have been the parent of the splendid Parable of the Rich Man.

A wide field is here laid open for speculation and conjecture; but kept down and restrained by one strong and irresistible consideration—that the allegorical ‘fire and worm,’ inspired into the Prophet’s mind, found its full completion in the history of the Church.

That cannot be too forcibly pressed or too closely remembered in our thoughts of the Future, and the fate of the lost. It aimed at the present life, and it was accomplished in it.

Divines have often found second meanings

in passages of Scripture. The Origenic and Philo-Judæan school found them throughout, and at times in singularly ingenious ways. Later ages have been more moderate and restrained, but many a difficult passage has been resolved by the double meaning, and held as a conclusion.

I crave, though, a one and distinct meaning and exposition for the 23rd and 24th verses of Isaiah; and again suggest that they apply to this life alone, and in no manner of wise, *in themselves*, to the Future; adapted by our Lord in virtue of His Supremacy and Divine Will.

If all our Lord's Parables and teaching had been of the same character, it must perforce have led to a totally different conclusion. If He had made that second meaning His own, and constantly impressed it, no conscientious expositor could have refrained from following it.

But our Lord did nothing of the kind. Eliminate three Parables—for the tares and net are one—and two warnings, and Hell and Hell-fire are in no case alluded to. They were a powerful engine on certain natures. And as He read the false, wavering hearts of the multitudes who followed and hung upon His words, He launched forth those tremendous anathe-

mas, which they received in their literal—though not uttered in their literal—sense. The wise understood; the unwise shuddered and wondered.

It is inartistic so to repeat and press a single point. Its truth must be its excuse and its compensation. But as the ‘worm and fire’ declared a *temporal* judgment of the Almighty by the mouth of the Prophet, the readers of Isaiah may reasonably confine their view to that aspect alone.

A certain stress has been laid on the Scribes’ and Pharisees’ interpretation at the time, but only as a secondary consideration. Nothing imperative in itself. The view advanced has internal strength, or none.

In St. Matthew’s earlier version from the Sermon on the Mount, the occasion of its utterance is different; and that Evangelist has given it more briefly, without the adjunct of ‘the worm.’ But the warning is the same, and its repetition may show the stress that our Lord laid upon it, so as to speak it on two separate occasions, far perhaps from each other, and to different classes of hearers.

In St. Matthew, chapter xxii., a Parable is set

forth in which a King makes a splendid marriage feast for his Son ; but his invited guests with various excuses decline to come. Disappointed, but not angered, he sends forth other servants with urgent messages that they should come, for that all things were prepared and ready. But they made light of it ; some went on their usual occupations, careless and undisturbed ; others grew angry at the repeated invitation, and persecuted, and even massacred the messengers. In his wrath the King slew them ; sent forth his armies and destroyed their city.

But not to be daunted, he looked abroad, and sent his invitations with equal earnestness into the highways and open country. In the end his tables were full, and the Wedding furnished with guests.

But as the King paces round the tables to give them welcome, he perceives among them a man who had so slighted his dignity as not to have on a wedding garment, or one suitable to the occasion ; but who had chosen to come in his common everyday attire,—who had assumed the privileges of the Church without reverence or feeling. The King was wroth at the open affront. He questioned him on it, but he was ‘speechless.’ Bind him hand and foot,’ he

exclaimed, 'and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'

That outer darkness is Hell under another form. We have had fire, the worm, and flame as the concomitants of Hell. We have now Hell as 'darkness.' Are they different, or do they mean the same? In the former, the fire—by interpretation—is remorse, and the worm conscience; in the present, 'outer darkness' is added to them in the excluded wedding guest. Bind him hand and foot was only to hurry him from the presence of the other guests in disgrace, not to inflict bodily pain. The gnashing was due to his exclusion from the banquet, which he had all the heart to enjoy, and knew that his late fellow-guests were in the full flush of the glorious and lavish entertainment prepared for them, while he was outside the palace gates in the darkness, soul-vexed and wretched. Was not that torment enough to make him rave and gnash his teeth? That ejection in its effect is identical with the worm, without the prefix of the unquenchable fire.

A question of this magnitude should be looked at from every point of view. Is there any essential difference in the criminality of those who by our Lord are denounced as the victims of fire, and the speechless wedding guest, that

they should undergo difference of treatment? Dives led a selfish life; the tares and fish were men living a sinful, selfish life in a mixed world; the nations were condemned for a selfish lack of charity—all condemned for the absence of the higher Christian graces.

Look at it once more, even at the expense of repetition, wearisome perhaps. The worm is conscience as the agent, the gnashing of teeth as the effect. They mean the same. The worm is active in the soul, and is too sharp and piercing to be borne in silence. The outer darkness in its sudden shock is piercing, too—hopeless, irrevocable, crushing the soul in the contrast between that state and the brightness of Heaven. Within is light; without is gloom. There is equal condemnation—eternal; but there is no fire.

In Matt. xxiv. the same metaphor is used towards the 'evil servant,' who, seeing that his Lord (Christ) delayed His coming, began to 'smite his fellow-servants,' and lead a life of wickedness and debauchery. His Lord comes on him unexpectedly, and appoints 'him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' Darkness, or exclusion from Heaven. That is Hell.

Once more, Matt. xxv. The kingdom of

Heaven is compared to 'a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants,' and entrusted them with five, two, and one talents, to 'every man according to his several abilities.'

After a long time he returns, and reckons with them. The holder of the five had gained five; the holder of the two had gained two; the holder of the one had made no use of it; and restored just as he had received it. What by interpretation does this amount to? This last was one of the common run of men, who pass through life in harmony with their means and their inclinations. Neither good nor bad in the world's eye. He had, at the least, as all men, even the lowest in social scale, have, one talent; and he lived as if he had it not.

The misuser of the one talent, like the wedding guest, is no defiant sinner or transgressor of the Law. He quietly 'hid his talent in the earth,' and restored it without benefit or increase—in other words, he lived without overt sin, but also without attempted goodness, Laodicean-wise. His sentence is sharp and sudden: 'Take therefore the talent from him . . . and cast ye the unprofitable servant into *outer darkness*; there shall be weeping and

gnashing of teeth.' Darkness again is Hell; but there is no fire.

In Matt. viii. is related the marvellous faith of the Centurion, and the stern reproach which it draws from our Lord against His own countrymen is, that 'many shall come from the east and west and be admitted into Heaven,' while 'the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' That, too, is Hell.'

It will scarcely be thought or argued, that there is any difference of result in the two modes of condemnation—Hell-fire and outer darkness. The King, the householders, the evil servant, the man travelling into a far country—different as they are in their illustration, all represent Christ Himself as Judge at the Last Day. It is what will happen. He does not give two modes of Judgment. He gives one Judgment under two forms.

In the popular estimate of future punishment, far too little, for the most part, is made of exclusion from Heaven and God's Presence. It is seldom used alone as an argument; it ought to be foremost of all, for our Lord represented it in strongest terms as one of the

eternal punishments. On one occasion, as recorded by St. Luke, He imaged forth future suppliants at the gate of Heaven, who had been excluded, crying out in agonized tones, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' It is not a mere cry, for they substantiate it by asserting that they had eaten and drunk in His Presence while He was on earth; and that He had taught in their streets.

The answer is stern: 'I know you not. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' The reason is given. It shall be when they 'shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves *thrust out*.'

It would be well to keep in remembrance that we were created and sent into the world for two prominent reasons. One, to uphold and forward God's works on earth; the other, to enter Heaven in the indestructibility of our souls. The excluded, by their evil or worthless lives, destroyed in their degree God's design, and exclusion blights their souls for ever.

Myriads of persons live as if they thought it enough to live their life here, and die 'in sure and certain hope of the resurrection' to an

eternal life of happiness hereafter. A frightful error, if the word of Christ be true. A certain resurrection. But whither? A good man's life is a glory of God. We are told in the Psalms that 'the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handy-work.' That was the ancient idea when the earth was believed to be the centre of the Universe; and that the Sun 'was to rule the (earth's) day, and the lesser light to rule the night.' A barren glory.

Since that time we have rested His glory on a different principle, gradually but surely, on the animate creation—not on man alone, that is at once his pride and his error, but on everything wherein is the breath of Life; and thence springs the true dignity of Man. Dominion was given to him that his thoughts and desires might thence be led up to God. It is only when they are so led that Man is worthy either of his Creator or of his own life on earth.

It is very true that all living things on earth are at present in subjection to him. Does he think that the only motive in placing him over them was to keep them in order, and to make use of them for his convenience or pleasure? Geologists shrink from drawing near to any approxi-

mation of time in its inconceivable remoteness, during which long and repeated æons of successions of races—megatheria and others—not only existed, but flourished, before Man appeared on the scene. Race succeeded race, and new races were developed from those in existence, rising from the smallest to those of giant form; and thence descending to those of modern times. Creatures perfect in the parts which God had given them to do, and giving glory to God in that perfection.

Is there any sort of evidence, or plausible suggestion, that they did not thrive and thoroughly fulfil their mission during all these protracted ages? Man was not required then to rule over them; he is not required now. They would preserve their balance and their level—should God so will—now as formerly. He is not their head from the excellence of his rule, but from the goodness and beneficence of God; and also to show forth His glory.

As the world grows older, greater and more diversified brain power is imparted to him; and secrets of Nature hidden in earth and air, unknown and unthought of by former generations, are gradually being opened and revealed, that he may exercise his dominion more effectually and more wisely; and so, that by each

marvellous, and of late almost miraculous, access of knowledge, his mind and thought might be more fervently drawn up to God, the Creator and Giver of all. But even that, if it may be reverently spoken, is not all that the Creator intended ; it is, that impressed by and living in these thoughts, he might be drawn nearer to Him ; and, life ended, might pass an eternity of happiness in Heaven.

Absolute and direct religious service, of whatever kind, is not the only preparation for the soul. Living in thankful, elevated thoughts is also living to God—imperfect of itself, but an essential ingredient in all true religion. And hence to a noble nature exclusion would be the most exquisite torment—a torment not to be surpassed in intensity, and which would put outward things aside for the time as little thought of—almost forgotten. Not to noble natures alone. The reality would become real to the most selfish, down-trodden, earthly souls, and rack the conscience in the excess of their ingratitude.

On the resurrection and the casting off the slough of the flesh, its vices, and its cruelties, the scales would fall from the eyes of the most reprobate, coarse, and guilty. The most atrocious criminals have at times been

brought to repentance, and a true sense of their criminality in the last days of their lives, by human aid and persuasion. A single flash of the Will of God at the gate of Heaven might disperse the darkest clouds of guilt from the soul of the most guilty, and leave it at once full of light—and despair. Exclusion itself, when thus seen in its true force and influence, might bring an anguish hitherto thought impossible even to these. The spiritual torment would not require to be intensified by the fire and the flame.

Exclusion and darkness have in some instances been spoken of by our Lord as equivalent ; in others a more literal and direct interpretation may be drawn from His language, and darkness be intimated as a locality. Taken literally, ‘outer darkness’ cannot, in the very simplicity of the phrase, mean a broad line or belt into which the condemned are to be cast, and which melts again into a dawn of light. It should mean a region as illimitable, or nearly so, as the heavenly region to which it is opposed—darkness without light, as Heaven is light without darkness. If there be a limit to it and a region of light be beyond, it is once more Purgatory under another and more endurable

form. No; the darkness, like the Judgment, is 'eternal and everlasting.'

But, like the flame, it should be a symbol, if it is to be in unison with other symbols, and so be ascribed to exclusion alone without the addition of perpetual night.

In St. Matthew viii. a third idea is conveyed—the darkness of unbelief. But the passages in which this word occurs, combined with gnashing of teeth, must undoubtedly be considered as indicating, in those times, the kingdom of Satan.

It is idle to speculate minutely on that kingdom, seeing that the Darkness itself is only a phrase. But a glance will show, that the furnace-glare of the everlasting fire is wholly inconsistent with it. They cannot go together. Yield the fire, and then the weeping and remorse in the night of exclusion are natural. The condemned have lost the Paradise of Heaven, and are thrust from that gate, with all its forfeited brightness and happiness in sight, into the gloom and despair of another world.

They see, for the first time, the unspeakable greatness of the glories they have thrown away, and the biting pangs of remorse can never leave them. Not the slightest or most distant

intimation by any torture or twisting of language can make the teaching of our Lord, or the disclosures of Revelation, as anything but endless. The souls of all men are divided, separated, and portioned out into two states, and the Power must be conceded to make each of them eternal. If there be hope for the lost, so that their sentence may by any means be forcibly broken—as in the Satanic wars, when Michael and his angels might again, metaphorically or allegorically, be called forth—there would be doubtfulness for the saved, lest *their* happiness might cease. Eternity by the decree of the Almighty is the same for both.

Still, as is well known, and already alluded to, a considerable portion of the Christian world hold to the belief, that mercy will be shown to all the lost in the long current of Eternity. It is a sentiment to be admired, to be loved and cherished ; one, as far as feeling goes, implanted by God into their nature. Nay, it is a feeling of the Creator Himself, as revealed to us, when it is said—Exodus xxxiv.—that the Lord proclaimed ‘ the Name of the Lord ’ in these terms: ‘ The Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth ; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression.’

God is a God of Love ; and what God has once declared He declares always. The spirit of that declaration is common in Scripture, and to be received with thankfulness ; but it is not ended ; it is modified by its close : ‘and will by no means clear the guilty.’ The guilty ! When ? At the Judgment. ‘Everyone knows,’—to use the common language of the world, and its secret persuasion,—that though his sins may have been great—very great—in life, Christ reabsorbed in God will be lenient, be merciful, will pardon freely at the Last Day ; for He will have a remembrance of His own human life, and know its almost insuperable temptations, and so will condone his errors, and pass him into Heaven.

Utterly hopeless ! because utterly opposed to all Scripture ; and to every sentence, law or word of Revelation.

A man, as many do, may put himself above any Scripture, or application of Scripture. There is nothing to be said to him. The writer has only to do with believers in Scripture, and men reliant on it. All others are not of God ; they are a law unto themselves. To them the homely saying applies in its strictness, ‘As the tree falls, it lies.’ A man has lived his life, and dies. There is an end of

all that he has felt, thought, done. His judgment is on what he has so felt, thought, and done in life. There is nothing beyond it. He has pronounced judgment on himself. His tree has fallen, and lies. He can do nothing more. His course and career are closed.

He may have been pardoned as his life drew to its close. God seeth not as man seeth. But it cannot stand that he shall be pardoned at the Judgment, while during the whole of his self-governed life he has been held as steeped in sin, and unworthy of pardon.

We rely on the Scripture. There is only one Scripture. Judgment is formed on everyone's life; it is pronounced at everyone's resurrection. We will not always see it; but the fact is as unmovable as a granite rock in mid-ocean; and the times of mercy shown and the time of final judgment are under totally different conditions, and are unalterable. Throughout the Jewish history, severity of sentence for idolatry, rebellion, or other wickedness has invariably been followed by mercy and re-installation. Many individual sins of heinous character received pardon in the wilderness. Many frightful offences of the Kings were treated leniently from Saul downwards. Ahab—the very worst, perhaps, of its

Kings in many respects—was so far pardoned on his repentance—‘Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before Me?’—that the expiation of his sins was passed on from himself to the double expiation in the sins of his son. And even after the prolonged severity of the seventy years’ exile in Babylon, and their return laden and dishonoured by the Ormuzd and Ahriman theory, the nation was restored to its own land under the direct protection of the Almighty.

But let it be observed, that in all these cases, and many others in the Old Testament, there was always room for repentance, change of purpose, amendment, and return to loyal devoutness and adoration. There was a future in advance; a future for good government in high places and faithful obedience in the community. And so, after the sharpest penalties on the chosen and gifted nation, mercy was mostly, if not always, extended. That in fewest words is the history of the Old Testament.

The same thing is discernible in the manner of our Lord. He healed, forgave, exhorted, and cast abroad miraculous power with a freedom that might almost seem indiscriminate. But Life was not closed in any.

A woman of abandoned life, with sins as scarlet, came into the house of Simon the Pharisee as He reclined at meat, a guest ; and kneeling behind the couch on which He lay, anointed His feet and bathed them in silence with bitter tears of sorrow and anguish in the memory of her past life. The Pharisee looked on amazed, and at last, unable to bear it, loudly expostulated with Him.

Our Lord in answer turned calmly to the woman, and said, 'Her sins, *which are many*, are forgiven.' The whole of her past guilty life was blotted out by a word. He did not stop for a moment to inquire the amount or character of her sins. After all, it is only what Isaiah, seven centuries before, declared of Him : 'A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench.'

Just so ; and it shows how readily the greatest sins may be pardoned in life, with years on years, or lesser periods, *before* death. It tells nothing of lost, fatal years of wasted life in the past. They are cancelled, as if they had never been, by the mercifulness of God in Christ.

But leave these isolated cases. To whom were these mercies and forgivenesses accorded ? To those who were living, and who might take

advantage of His compassion, and reform and lead better lives. He gave them opportunity. He gives opportunity to the worst culprits. Life past, and the unrepented record of evil closed, nothing in force of language can be sterner or more compromising than His condemnation of the wicked. He denounces them without hope.

The aspect under which we most delight to view our Lord is naturally the aspect of Love, boundless Love ; boundless Mercy, Compassion, and free Forgiveness of sins. And, indeed, all that St. John wrote of love in his first Epistle is little more than a gloss on the life of Christ. The yielding tenderness of His Nature towards all who did not scorn and reject Him was unsurpassed, wholly unsurpassed, wholly without parallel amongst men ; but what escapes the superficial, selfish view of so many is, that underneath it lay an austerity, sternness and unbending severity in just judgment, as hard and unmoved as unexpected ; and only, if at all, to be likened to the mode of the most clear-sighted and impartial judges. It may be summed up and epitomized by the terrible denunciation : ‘Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.’

If the two, the Epistle and the Denunciation, were placed anonymously side by side, would it be easy to pronounce them as characterizing the same person? I doubt it. And yet they are not only the true aspect of the same, but are the true result of the two states in which the character is set forth.

The true character of our Lord can never be rightly attained without a clear and prominent view of these two marked and essential delineations of it. The fulness of the severity will not be shown until the Day of Judgment, or at any rate in accordance with the Parables, until the soul has left the body; but the severity itself existed in the mind of our Lord, as evidenced throughout the Gospels, though only then in the mercy of forewarnings.

In regard to the severity itself, we think for the most part too much of the body in which we live, and carry on that idea too much into the future. It is difficult—perhaps not wholly possible—to divest ourselves of the idea, and represent and realize ourselves as wholly clothed with a ‘spiritual body’; and so thoughts of corporeal pains, and the sufferings of many kinds which we have gone through, involuntarily come in, with the horror of flame above all, and make it hard to look on our limbs as

racked with pains for thousands of years, leaving Eternity alone.

But we should be wrong. The spiritual nature, like the spirit of a man, may have mental agonies, which, as in the higher natures of men, may be far above any passing physical sufferings of grosser beings, and the wailings and gnashings of teeth may express them. We know not ; we shall never know in life ; it may even be kept from our knowledge in mercy hereafter ; but the coarse fire of our hearths may be cast out from our thoughts at once, and for ever. The fiery, bottomless pit, whatever it may mean, is irrevocably closed by Satan's final descent into its lake of fire.

What manner of region, or world, or locality, will be assigned to the excluded from Heaven is completely beyond all human rational thought, for the Scriptures have preserved an utter silence on it, which is not to be broken. But though we have no knowledge, not even an intimation of the region prepared for them, there can be no doubt in the believer's mind that one *is* prepared. In Revelation xxi., there is a description of Heaven under the mystical symbol of a vast city, the New Jerusalem ; and a gorgeous description is

given of its walls of pure gold, and its twelve foundations, each of a precious stone, answering to the twelve Apostles; and its twelve gates, each of one solid pearl. A glowing intimation is also given of the glory and honour of the Kings and their nations of the redeemed, who shall be its future inhabitants. An angel, too, is commissioned to show the ineffable splendour and the happiness of those who shall be admitted within the walls of 'the holy city'; but no sooner has he extolled the blessedness of the saved, than he launches anathemas against the condemned, concluding with these forcible words: 'Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.'

'*Without*'; outside the walls; in the locality assigned to them. But the city did not descend from Heaven into a plain of darkness! The saved enter Heaven; the lost remain without, excluded.

We cannot suppose them debarred, thrust forth from the gates—to keep up the metaphor of the 'holy city'—into a wide desert plain; crowded, agonized, aimless and crushed together by millions round the walls. That cannot be. They cannot remain there through Eternity. They are repelled, forced back into a locality

of their own, the moral, metaphorical 'outer darkness,' whether in sight of Heaven or not, where they are to exist for ever and ever in bitterness of soul for the things they have forfeited and lost. Not that we are to suppose that the weeping can last through millions of years. Sorrow may last, but not the violence of grief expressed by the gnashing of teeth. After a time the soul must sink into a state of settled despair—like Dives, who is throughout a paramount example—and yielding to its terrible destiny, occupy itself in the ways which that destiny will allow.

Speaking after our human ways, and human feelings which we are told will enter into both states hereafter, the spiritual body must have *some* occupation. Nothing short of a wild fanaticism will readily believe that the Almighty would impose physical suffering, whether fire or otherwise, in addition to regrets, anguish, and remorse on being shut out for ever and ever from the happiness of the blest, and leave the resuscitated soul to an inert, helpless, endless torture. If so, the representatives of the five Virgins, who only slumbered and slept; the representatives of the man of one talent, who did not disown his Lord, but made no use of his talent; and the

representatives of the ignorant heathens on the left hand, would be subject to the same fate as the most vile, cruel, atrocious criminals and miscreants who ever disgraced the age in which they lived. Instinctively we say, it will not be.

Whatever that state may be, it may be held as an apportionment, a condition; a state infinitely lower, and apart, and separate from Heaven; a state in which the lost make employment in some sort; but of what nature we dare not, cannot surmise; for surmise would of all vain things be the most vain and foolish. But we may be morally sure that it is not merely a state of tears and folding of hands in impatient regret, any more than Heaven is a state, as figuratively shown in Scripture, of praise, hymns and adoration. We admit and acknowledge the force of that without a moment's hesitation. In symbolism they go together.

Heaven, as already said, has been subjected, and is so still, to many phantasies and inventions. No limit can well be put on the teeming faculties of individual natures, but none take the figurative and symbolical harps and songs as the real and true blessings and happiness of Heaven. Why should the fate of the excluded

be brought down to a literal interpretation of perpetual and unceasing agony and torture of flame and brimstone—signs of remorse and anguish? The final denunciation of Jesus by the angel—be it kept in remembrance—was the word ‘without.’ A voice from heaven, heard by St. John, devoted certain sinners to ‘the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.’ That passes. An angel sent by Christ to St. John then carries him away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shows him Heaven in the guise of the Holy City. He specifies sins and sinners, but only denounces them by the word ‘without.’

The two greatest sins recorded in Scripture are undoubtedly the destruction for the time of God’s design in Paradise, and the crucifixion of our Lord. Of the fate of Judas we know nothing; it is in the future. But we know the fate of Adam, and that it was exclusion with a life of toil and labour before him; and that his punishment was *confined* to that. Not a word of future fire, nor even a word of the future life, except that his sin had changed the means of entering it.

It is not hard to believe of condemnation that it is a state of distance, aversion and alienation from God, without material darkness

and everlasting fire. Figuratively, in accordance with the Scriptures, it is with the devil and his angels. Actually, it is not so by the same Scriptures; for, however interpreted, it has been seen that the Beast and the false Prophet have been thrust down into the lake of fire, never again to issue forth. We authoritatively learn from the same source that Apollyon—Satan—after many intermissions or reprieves, is to be forcibly cast, with his whole array of angels and spirits, into the self-same fiery imprisonment, and to be kept down for *ever and for ever*.

We fear the devil and his angels hereafter. It is a very common fear. We are taught that fear and dread in our families from earliest life. We are taught it in our Churches. We dread them as the fiery ministers of God's wrath against sin, trembling lest our human weakness, as well as wickedness, should be ruthlessly recompensed by them at the Judgment. We fear Satan as the giant Power delighting in the perdition of the souls which he has wrested or beguiled from their allegiance to God, and mercilessly tormenting them; and all the while Satan and all his host are cast down, slaves, subjects, victims to the Almighty whom they have dared to oppose! Metaphor or no meta-

phor, Satan has lost his power. He is nothing whatever to the soul after judgment. No interpretation of Scripture can set him free unless by a new release, as after the Millennium, by the Almighty, of which there is not a single word on record.

It has been shown throughout that the casting forth or exclusion of the lost is for ever. That is their sentence, and there is in all Scripture but one solitary inference, and that a very slender one, to the contrary. It is in the Parable (Matt. xviii.) of the King who took account of his servants, and found among them a merciless oppressor of his fellow-men, who owed him 10,000 talents, and whom in the end he felt constrained to cast into prison 'till he should pay all that was due unto him.' In this Parable we have another allegorical condemnation of the lost without the flame. We have had darkness; we have now the prison. The ruined man could not have paid the enormous debt under the most favourable circumstances; but he was now debarred from gathering a single mite towards payment; and so his sentence was in reality for everlasting.

But in the wider interpretation of the Parable the 'till' may be held to mean, till

the offended Majesty of God might be appeased by the prolonged misery and mental sufferings of the lost, and mercy in the end might triumph over justice. It is a pious hope—not altogether impossible, but still, with another distant leaning to Purgatory; and in regard to the law passed by Christ upon the soul, it can never amount to an article of faith. In every Parable, warning, or allusion, there is not one syllable of mitigation in time—nothing but a relentless, hopeless Eternity—with this solitary exception of the Steward, if it be one.”

To return to the excluded from ‘the holy city.’ Exclusion is their only recorded penalty; and in a preceding passage in thorough connection with it, the only sentence runs thus: ‘There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth; neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.’ No other menace or denunciation is used; and it is, as we have seen, at the very close and summing up of Revelation. They are simply excluded; and as the ‘holy city’ is typical of Heaven, the excluded are the whole of that portion of the human race, in their aggregate, who are under condemnation, whether as the goats, or the tares in flame; or the net, or the evil servant with the hypocrites; or the Virgins, or

the misuser of the talent ; whatever their fate, or whithersoever they go under their doom, 'the holy city' is the typical Heaven ; and if they are excluded from it, that is Hell.

The following resumé brings the whole of the Gospel notices of Hell under one view.

HELL AND HELL FIRE.

1.	'Thou fool'	...	...	Matt. v.
2.	{ Hand	...	...	{ Matt. v.
	{ Hand	...	...	{ Matt. xviii.
	{ Hand	...	...	{ Mark ix.
3.	{ Tares	...	...	{ Matt. xiii.
	{ Net ...	...	...
4.	Nations	...	...	Matt. xxv.
5.	Dives	...	...	Luke xvi.

EXCLUSION AND OUTER DARKNESS.

1.	Children of kingdom	Matt. viii. ... gnashing of teeth.
2.	Wedding guest	Matt. xxii. ... gnashing.
3.	Evil servant ...	Matt. xxiv. ... gnashing.
4.	One talent ...	Matt. xxiv. ... gnashing.
5.	Virgins ...	Matt. xxv. ... exclusion.
6.	{ Lord, open ...	Matt. vii. ... depart from Me.
	{ Lord, open ...	Luke xiii. ... exclusion.
7.	Unjust steward	Matt. xviii. ... prison.

All these passages refer in direct terms to the Day of Judgment ; or are in the light of warnings and admonitions leading to the same end. Put it to the simplest analysis. We rely on our Lord's authority alone—we have no other—for the fate of the soul hereafter.

Without that authority we should have no certain, assured knowledge of a hereafter at all. He brought that faith out of darkness into light. He did more; He gave the true knowledge and means of meeting it. He knew; He declared; He taught how Heaven was to be won, and Heaven to be lost. Did He teach with a double tongue, or with Isaiah's 'stammering lips'? Impossible! We have before us five threatenings of Eternal fire; and seven intimations of Eternal exclusion, with outer darkness as a sign and concomitant of that exclusion. However blended, they must mean one and the same. The fire yields; absorbed in the darkness.

It seems almost childish for us to suppose that our Lord—speaking and thinking with profound reverence—should, as it were, toss to and fro, as occasions arose, sentences of fire and sentences of exclusion on offences scarcely different except in name, if there were any real difference between them. The most cursory analysis of the twelve sentences shows this to demonstration. But let this be kept open for consideration.

It has also to be remembered that in the Revelation Satan and his angels are cast down into the bottomless pit, and rendered

harmless *before* the Day of Judgment. If the record in Revelation be received, there is no gainsaying this. The whole Book, progressive from the first, is in its degree chronological. Beginning, as has been noted, with the then existing state of the seven churches, it goes on, apparently, from trumpet to trumpet, and vial to vial, with episodes and interludes straight on to the Last Judgment—a description of Heaven for the saved, and a denunciation of the condemned. The sealing down of Satan and his angels, however interpreted, is undoubtedly before the Last Judgment ; and, as it stands, is a fact—impressive, unsurpassable.

It may be urged that the seal can be broken by the same angel to admit the souls condemned to ‘the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels’; and that, metaphor and symbol apart, they can be thus assigned to him. But the Scriptures say nothing of the kind, either by assertion or implication. There is not an atom of ground for it. These things have been written as facts, realities. They are not so. They are veiled truths for the exercise of our faith, as indeed are all the Parables and passages which have been brought forward in illustration. The great truth, when released from metaphor, is that Satan is finally coerced;

and not a syllable is written of him after that coercion under the symbol of the seal.

It will be seen that there is a repetition in the above summary; the offending hand and eye appear three times, and the 'Lord, Lord' twice. Putting these repetitions aside, and counting them as units, there remain five in flame and seven in darkness and exclusion; one, the fraudulent Steward doomed to prison; and one, uncounted, a denunciation of the Pharisees, which may apply to either.

Under interpretation they may all mean the same thing, though under different forms of expression; but not in the remotest approach to literal meaning, with the exception of exclusion.

Suppose, for argument's sake, I choose to take the darkness and gnashing of teeth and exclusion, and place my faith upon them. I have in reality no more in my favour, nor less, than the advocates of fire would have. And judging and forming my faith on the statements and disclosures of Scripture, a man has no more right to tie me down to the flame than I have to limit and force him to believe and rely on the darkness and exclusion alone *without* the flame. They must be taken together, and in reason be interpreted by each other.

It is one doctrine. That is absolute, incontrovertible. They meet in symbol. Taken separately, each in its own natural sense, they do not meet. As a judgment of our Lord they do.

Why He thought fit to vary the two illustrations is not soluble by analysis of offences. It may be that He varied them in probable weight and influence on the hearers at the time. He read their thoughts and judged their capacities. The fire might strike piercingly in one, while the tenderer conscience of another might sigh in sadness at the thought of the darkness and the eternal banishment from Heaven and the Presence of God.

Be this as it may, it is the grandest subject that can employ the mind and the soul of Man, in the presence of which other thoughts, rightly considered, sink into comparative insignificance. But it has its consolations also. If faithfully received, there can scarcely be a greater relief to the conscience. The dread of the fiery hereafter has poisoned many a timid, earnest soul in its last hours upon earth, making death hideous and the hereafter a terror. It is not from reason or reflection, or a close examination of the Scriptures. It is for the most part from those Scriptures having been impressed by our

teachers into their mere literal form. And thus it has happened that any who have had the courage to doubt, or solemnly examine, have been almost ranged amongst the enemies of religion and divine truth.

The writer is unconscious of any bias towards a foregone conclusion. His desire was to examine the whole subject with calmness, and with as unprejudiced a mind as he could bring to it towards the close of a long life of decided belief. Neither is he aware of any forced or non-natural interpretation of the portions of Scripture which he has ventured to analyze. He has taken them as they are written, compared, and held them in a thorough faith. It is not, as intimated, an interpretation which is concurrent with popular opinion. Though tending to a great relief, it may jar in cases from its opposition to that opinion. But popular opinion is mostly founded upon what it has grown up in; not always right. And the eternal fires of Hell, with Satan and his angels at their head, have been in that growth.

Popular teaching on a kindred subject has gone astray. It has mostly held, that in the Resurrection we are in some miraculous way to rise in the same bodies in which we have died,

drawn also from the book of Revelation; where it is said prophetically, in allusion to the Last Day, 'the sea gave up the dead that were in it.' Yes; but how? Not *from* the sea, any more than the earth will give up all the dead that died upon its surface, torn and consumed by wild beasts amongst other means. The bodies perish in sea and land to utter annihilation in common language; or are changed infinitesimally into atoms and gases in chemical phrase. The souls pass from them; and at the Last Day will be 'clothed upon'—2 Cor.—by spiritual bodies, and so arise.

No doubt it is next to an impossibility to fix unanswerable forms of Scriptural interpretation; but when we administer the Oriental genius of Holy Writ, Old and New, by the cold formulary of Northern logic, true interpretation will be marred from the very outset.

The Book of Revelation has been consulted as the only source of a description of Hell and the final destiny of Satan. But a fact has still to be noted, that the Visions of St. John were written two whole generations after the death of our Lord, and that it is on His teaching alone, that any stress can be laid, or any belief

founded. So long as St. John adheres to the teaching of our Lord in his Visions—well. If there be dissonance or diversity, it must be thoroughly reconciled and adjusted, or Revelation cedes. No one can carefully study the two without perceiving a point—already so often insisted upon—and insisted upon still, because of its immense importance, in which there is apparent diversity of teaching.

Our Lord decrees the lost to the dominion and control of Satan *after* the Last Judgment. St. John declares once and again, and with exactness of language—that Satan is hopelessly enchained, incarcerated, sealed down, and cut off from earth, its interests, its inhabitants long *before*.

Can these two statements, so opposed in appearance to each other, be reconciled? Verbally, no; impossible; and if they are to rest on plain statements and plain language, as commonly received, they are clearly irreconcilable, and Scripture is read at variance with itself. If both are to be received, they must be separated, and be separately treated. There may be more ways of this separation than one. The danger is, that as unity to a believer's mind is imperative, the unity may be forced. The simplest, unforced, seems to be this.

St. John, on the conclusion of his historical Visions of the seven churches, speaks of a long series of ages and events, when Satan should exercise intermittent power and dominion before the Last Judgment, or final consummation of all things. That is clear. Equally clear is the Apostle's announcement, that his power will have ceased antecedently to that Day. He is imprisoned, with his angels, and militant forces with which he, mystically or otherwise, stormed Heaven, and God's Throne, Supremacy, and Dominion. It is then, and not until then, that the Vision of the New Heaven and the New Earth is laid open, to be succeeded by the brilliant Vision of the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, (Rev. xxi.). Satan beheld neither.

These dates are very important. If you contravene them, you contravene and weaken the authority and teaching of the Book of Revelation. As written, it is clear, straightforward, absolute. If there be force in words or language, Satan has disappeared before the final judgment on the souls of men.

It is wearisome to repeat the same things time after time ; but it is—or may be—necessary to impress them.

Whether or not, that fact may be a consola-

tion to all, it should be a great consolation to the timid or the doubtfully conscientious, that there cannot be 'an accuser of the brethren' at the Last Day before the Judgment Seat of God in Christ and the Holy Trinity.

Once more, and let it be well looked into, it is only when Satan has for ever disappeared, that the glowing Visions of Heaven are vouchsafed to St. John in Patmos. That is undeniable—undeniable sequence of events as recorded. But the double Judgment of Heaven and Hell is pronounced at the same time. The Parable of the Nations, the sheep and the goats, is in evidence of it. The Judgment is double, though simultaneous—'go ye on the one hand, and go ye on the other'—but both classes are present.

There is, too, anathema against the lost in both Visions. In the one—the Vision of the 'Great White Throne'—the human race 'were judged, every man according to his works.' But—yet once again—*before* it 'the Devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.' He had nothing to do with it. He was himself adjudged, condemned, powerless (Rev. xxi.).

In the second Vision—the last of all Revelations—the Exclusion must agree, coalesce, and

be one with the Judgment of the 'White Throne,' or there would be a palpable contradiction. 'Blessed are they who do His commandments . . . that they may enter in through the gates of the Holy City.' All the rest are thrust out with pitiless scorn and opprobrium into the (metaphorical) space beyond the walls, 'the outer darkness.' That is their final doom in the distant and last age of the world—the close of Revelation, the close of prophecy, miracles, and all other supernatural manifestations of God to man. May it again be—pardonably—said, 'Satan is not present. He is in the eternal expiation, long suffered, of his own evil deeds.

Thus far St. John—clear in language, distinct in terms. Our Lord's ascription of the wicked to Hell fire, and *once* to 'the devil and his angels' in it, is equally, precise, straight, and clear. But the first—the worm and the fire—was the adaptation of a phrase from Isaiah to an object with which the phrase had not the remotest connection; and the solitary mention of the second was the conclusion of a Parable.

It has succinctly been shown that fire and outer darkness cannot agree with each other;

they cannot be one and the same ; and that whatever power Satan may be supposed to have had in demoniacal possession and other malign influence, he could not torture the condemned at the same time with darkness and flame. And so, whatever may be meant by our Lord's condemnation of lost souls to the fires of Hell, they are not to be read as history or philosophy are read, but as mysteries, allegories, and signs, on which the faithful are to meditate, reflect, collate, and search with a thoughtful, true and reverent spirit. Our Lord does not condemn, parabolically, darkness to one, fire to another, prison to a third, as to different destinies hereafter. There are not three hells. There is only one. That one, assuredly, *cannot* by Revelation be brimstone and fire.

On the other side, it is not within reach of supposition that the teaching of St. John should differ in any conceivable degree from that of our Lord, of whom he was the favoured and most trusted disciple. Neither can it enter into belief that the destiny of Satan was in any way modified or changed subsequently. His fate was fixed in the mystic and oracular sentence : ' it shall bruise thy head.'

Let what our Lord said, and what the

Visions revealed, be read alike in symbol, and the difficulty vanishes; they fall into unison.

In all these varieties of opinion and comment one thought may—nay, must—rise above all: that though the mode may be open to many views, many phantasies, many prepossessions—some less wise than others—one paramount decree hangs suspended over the head of every soul that has ever drawn the breath of life—that sin of every kind will have its sure recompense at the hand of God hereafter.

Condemnation is an awful thought at best. Not a matter for the exercise or the vagaries of human opinion. Not one for eloquent or subtle argument. The plainer and simpler it is stated, the more likely it is to reach absolute truth. Nothing can well be more safely asserted than this, that the teaching of our Lord cannot be contradictory. If He speaks of the lost as thrown into everlasting fire in one Parable, and simply excluded in another, as being cast forth into outer darkness in a third, they must practically represent *the same thing*. They may be metaphorical, or they may be real, but they must be in agreement and in unison. In the face of perhaps a too frequent repetition—fire, darkness, prison, exclusion from the Feast of

the Bridegroom while the prudent Virgins went in, exclusion from the gates of the Holy City in the sight of the blessed to whom they were thrown open—these things are not so many judgments varied at will at the time of utterance. Such a thought would be worse than folly ; it would be sinful, as being derogatory to our Lord in His own declaration of the one final Judgment.

It will be seen, unless the writer has utterly failed in his object, that the horrible dread of the flame has no sort of reality by the language, terms, or method of Scripture itself. The language, as mystical, is open to fanciful interpretation. The terms and the method of the writings vary. But whatever their variation they are reconcilable. They do not contradict each other ; they vary. It is for the believer to reconcile them. The threatened severity may be carried out in the end to the full ; or mercy may triumph in the end over justice. We know not. It would be ill to rely too much upon it. It may also be difficult to take into thought, that all the tenderness and regard for sinners which our Lord had on earth, should be turned into merciless austerity hereafter. It is enough for us to believe, that

the rigorous sternness of His denunciations in life were in mercy to save men from condemnation *after* life. If so, it is not the less in mercy, that the furnace and the flames should be sternly threatened though not real, but stand as signs and symbols of lesser things, terrible still, if not equal in excess of terror. Should that be so, as we believe, our Lord's adaptation of Isaiah's fire and worm was in an extreme of mercifulness and love for men.

It is not a little singular, that in all His Parables there should not be any warnings against atrocious cruelty, murders, or any of the more abhorrent crimes and vices of which human nature is capable. The murder of 'the heir' of the Lord of the Vineyard, and the retribution which followed it, were essential parts of the Parable on Himself and His own fate; and were directed against the Pharisees and Rulers of Jerusalem as a class, not as individual criminals. The strain of His especial warnings lay chiefly against infractions of the Law of Moses, and so by implication against the Sacred Majesty of God.

It is as though those atrocious crimes bore with them their own condemnation; and that He therefore directed His anathemas against

sins to which men of His time were pre-eminently liable ; but which in received opinion were too often held in secondary and pardonable importance. Often great, selfish, unmerciful, and worthy of penalties of severity ; but which were scarcely to be looked for in an Eternity of flame.

In the view of that Eternity it may not be out of place to run through the sins and offences against which our Lord set the weight of His authority while on earth. Broadly they might be characterized as :

Anger.	Hate.
Unforgiveness.	Adultery.
Cherished personal sins.	Hypocrisy.
Harsh Judgment.	

All these were under His constant anathema. Two of greater weight remain :

Denial of Christ before men.
Ascription of Miracles to Satan.

With the exception of the last two, they are all sins and offences of Man against Man on earth ; not against God direct.

A thought may pass harmlessly through the

brain on this subject of condemnation ; though at the same time, it is the merest hypothesis ; that as there can be no question of grades of happiness, or nearness to Christ hereafter, for they are fully sanctioned in Scripture, so there may be gradations in the region, or regions, assigned to the excluded. The disciples, metaphorically, are to be assessors before the throne of God to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. St. Paul too, speaks of a Vision in which he was ‘ caught up into *the third Heaven.*’ Whatever those things may mean, they indicate gradations. We cannot look on Heaven as an assemblage of risen souls where Saints and Martyrs are intermixed with the saved who have mercifully, though hardly, escaped condemnation.

Our Lord declares, that in Heaven there are ‘ many mansions.’ It would be silly to apply this phrase to the multitude of mansions in the space of Heaven. It means degrees of exaltation, or nearness to God.

It has been one of the most powerful stimulants to the devoutest minds in all past ages, and is equally so in our own. It may, or may not be, a fond fancy, that the great hope to meet the great ; the wise to meet the wise ; and the good to meet the good. It is, at all

events, the hope of separation, and the meeting of like to like.

Why not, by parity of reasoning, gradations for the excluded, when tyrants, murderers and the vilest of mankind may be separated from the sinful, whose sins have just, and only just, passed the extreme limits of Divine Mercy, and caused their exclusion? It is a thought—natural perhaps, but with no authoritative foundation whatever in Scripture. Powerless, and of no moment in the literal lake of fire and flame; but of great possible power when applied to the allegorical regions of outer darkness.

There is, though, a danger still—palpable in our own times—of wresting or turning the Scriptures aside from their received interpretation into a refined subtle, controversial system, which in the reality of plain language lands them on their defensive. Scarcely a modern book on Divinity in which controversial criticism is not embalmed in some form or other. The result is inevitable. The authority of Holy Writ is lowered, and personal religion suffers. That is the bane of modern criticism. It does not seek to throw light on obscurities. It does not seek to remedy errors which have

crept in through transcribers, or other causes, but undermines the very foundations of our faith. It does not neutralize error; it saps religion. It does not draw men to God; it alienates them. It does not make men conscientious students in theology; it makes them, if not atheists, atheistically inclined.

Such for example is one of the effects of the great controversy of our time, the Inspiration of the older Scriptures. They are avowedly treated, just as any ancient Literature that has come down to us is treated; and are adjudged, partly by supposed probabilities; partly by supposed inaccuracies; partly by conjecture. In other words they are to be judged by the cold rules of Classical criticism alone. If this question of Inspiration is ever to be set at rest, it must be by the *internal evidence* of the Scriptures themselves; prophetic declarations fulfilled within the times and history of Holy Writ. Evidence of that tenor and strength is readily to be found by those who will seek earnestly for it; and a single solid proof of it would outweigh a volume, a very library of indirect argumentative assertion.

Without question there are points of greatest moment in the Scriptures that require adjusting; and which, until adjusted, will cause

religious heart-burnings and religious schism. We stand as a Church by ourselves; the only Church that goes back as far as it can to the foundation head of languages in which the Scriptures were written. We have no Septuagint, or Vulgate: we go to the only true and available source; and that source rightly and reverently approached should add force to them, and subserve the cause of Christianity as well in its broader Missionary sense of the religion of nations, as in its narrower sense of personal worship.

The thought is painful, that we, who boast ourselves as of the purest Church in the Christian world should be thus fatally torn with internecine feuds in a Book which intermediately—as far as human effort is to be sanctioned and blest—is to be the means of converting the heathen and erring world to the Truth.

No remedy is apparent. It may be far off; but we have the fiat of Gamaliel, and it is certain to arise in its due time. Until that time our souls must be possessed in patience; but with no just means put aside in contribution to it. One of the first, if not the first, is to harmonize Scripture with itself; and until that is done, and done thoroughly, a school of

critics will survive who will unsettle belief, and supply nothing but clever intellect in its place.

Life is a solemn thing, however looked at ; and the passage between the two states a subject for profound consideration, for the holiest and most faithful of men. It may be a relief to think upon our Lord's mercifulness and free forgiveness to sinners upon Earth. It may be a relief to think of Parables and Allegories under lenient modes of interpretation ; but the outer darkness, and the wailing, the exclusion from Heaven—under the freest interpretation, still remain to chasten and confront us. We cannot get rid of them. We get rid of the fire and brimstone ; we get rid of the flame ; we get rid of Satan as a tormentor and agent of Divine displeasure. We do not in any conceivable manner get rid of the Eternity of Life ; nor the dread and solemn Judgment of the soul Hereafter.

RESUMÉ.

THE writer has nothing to add in substance to the simple plan which he laid down for his guidance ; but he is unwilling to let it pass wholly from him without recalling it in few words.

Satan, personally, appeared *only once* in the Old Testament, and then in parabolic disguise as ‘ the Serpent ’ in Eden.

He was once doubtfully named in Chronicles, and contradicted in Kings.

He was the hero in the imaginative poem of Job.

He was mentioned in vindictive wrath in Psalm cix.

He was spoken of in a Vision by the prophet Zechariah.

In no one single instance by the remotest interpretation had he anything to do with the soul hereafter. A force was ascribed to him in Eden. It was confined to the present life alone. He could by ascription afflict, give pains in bodily suffering to Man, 'bruise his heel,' but nothing beyond.

No influence was ascribed to him in all the greater sins of the old world; he was not named in them.

None in the sins of the 'Sons of God' with the daughters of men, the criminal inter-marriages of believers with the godless.

None with the world's guilt in the Deluge.

None with the guilt at Babel.

A blank from Eden of 3,000 years; and then only in a contradictory passage in Kings and Chronicles. That is the Bible statement.

On the return from the seventy years' Captivity a new Deity—Beelzebub—came to the front; a Babylonish spirit, sometimes standing in the people's belief in the place of Satan, but separate from him. His name was familiar in our Lord's time; but no influence of any kind is recorded of him, beyond a fanciful ascription to our Lord's casting forth of demons from the possessed.

Satan, fallen from dignity and faith in the Old Testament, was reinstated by our Lord in the New. Whether in reality or in trance, he was acknowledged in the opening of His Ministry as the assumed distributor of the world's riches and greatness, the Prince of this world.

That passed. The next mention of him was by implication in the Sermon on the Mount in a denunciation of 'hell fire'; a denunciation as terrible as it was sudden. Followed twice on the same occasion in the same form of speech; applied to a culpable adherence to darling sins.

Illustrations and parables follow in the succeeding course of His Ministry, and Hell fire becomes a powerful incentive; but not alone; it is conjoined with darkness, exclusion, prison, bonds; weeping and gnashing of teeth in impotent anguish and remorse at rejection from Heaven.

Neither is 'fire' the motive in the majority of recorded parables; and those on record must have formed a very small proportion of His teaching under that form: for 'without a parable spake He not unto them.' It is reasonable to conjecture, that He adapted the varied

form of Parable to the time, and to the persons whom He taught. Reasonable also, that He knew the temper and genius of the people for allegorical and mystic knowledge, and that His words would be interpreted.

The idea is strengthened by the way in which the Parables are related; not on any plan, but by the occasion. An instance is seen in Matt. 25, where three Parables follow each other in apparent succession. The slumbering Virgins are simply shut out. The misuser of the talent is cast out into outer darkness. The Nations on the left hand are doomed to 'everlasting fire.' The end is the same.

Touching our Lord's use of the fires of Hell, a certain stress may reasonably be laid on the fact, that the phrase did not *originate with Himself*; but that He gained the idea, and used it as a quotation from the prophet Isaiah, well known to those whom He addressed. It may also be hazarded, that seeing the great effect of its application, He was induced to use it as occasions arose. At all events, the terrors of the eternal fire and flame were ever and anon repeated in sternest form of words, to make their way according to the mind and genius of the hearers.

The Gospels are closed. The Epistle follows. Sixty years after our Lord's death St. John, an exile in Patmos gave his Revelation to the Church. His Inspiration led him to many great and stupendous issues in the world, clothed, with the exception of the few first chapters in Visions of the deepest mystic allegorical import. Among them the presence, reign, and influence of Satan.

He first appears in chapter ix. An angel falls from Heaven like a Star, having the keys of Hell, or the bottomless pit. He opens it, and smoke arises 'as the smoke of a great furnace,' and with it a vast symbolic army with a king over them—Apollyon; Satan. They have power to torment men for five months.

In chapter xii., 'there was war in Heaven,' Satan fought against Michael; but he was 'cast out, and his angels were cast out with him.' He fell upon earth 'in great wrath,' knowing that he had '*but a short time.*'

In chapter xiii. wars are carried on against the Saints by 'the beast with seven heads and ten horns,' and the beast with two horns, both drawing their power from Satan.

Their fate is read in chapter xix. They were

‘cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.’

The fate of Satan himself approaches in chapter xx. An angel descends from Heaven ‘having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand.’ Satan is seized ; cast into the bottomless pit, and ‘bound for a thousand years.’

Let it be interpreted as it will, Satan is powerless for that mystic period.

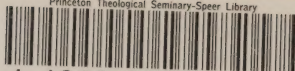
At its end, he is loosed for ‘a little season . . . out of his prison.’ He levies enormous armies, and wars against the saints of God and the beloved City. A short warfare ; for ‘fire came down from God,’ and Satan with his hosts, and the beast and the false prophet were cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where they ‘shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever !’ They are as dead.

Thence follows the great Judgment of all. Heaven is allegorically portrayed as a glorious city. The saved are admitted, that is Heaven ; the lost are shut out, that is Hell.

Satan imprisoned in his lurid kingdom, has nothing in any conceivable shape to do with the human soul. Those within the City are blest. Those without are weeping, dejected,

weighed down with remorse. We know nothing beyond. They are torn with fierce and fiery anguish ; but there is no material fire and flame. Figurative, or real, every spark is with Satan under the angel's seal.

THE END.



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